AN ILLUSTRATED WESTERN MAGAZINE

Cowboy Stories

AUGUST

20c

A CLAYTON MAGAZINE

WHEN COWBOYS RIDE

THE DIAMOND A BOSS IS BOWLED OVER WHEN HIS WADDIES HIT THE LEATHER —A COMPLETE NOVELETTE BY

GLENN A. CONNOR

GUNS OF THE DOUBLE CROSS

"CORKY" FOLLOWS THE TRAIL OF A SIX-GUN GANG OF KILLER RUSTLERS—A BOOK-LENGTH RANGE NOVEL BY

ARMY ADAMS

THE OLD "YALLER" SHIRT

A RODEO YARN BY

RAY HUMPHREYS

THE FLASH RIDER

A COWBOY HITS HIS STRIDE IN A BRONC-BUSTING YARN BY

FRANCIS W. HILTON

CAR OWNERS

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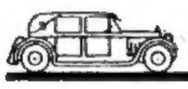
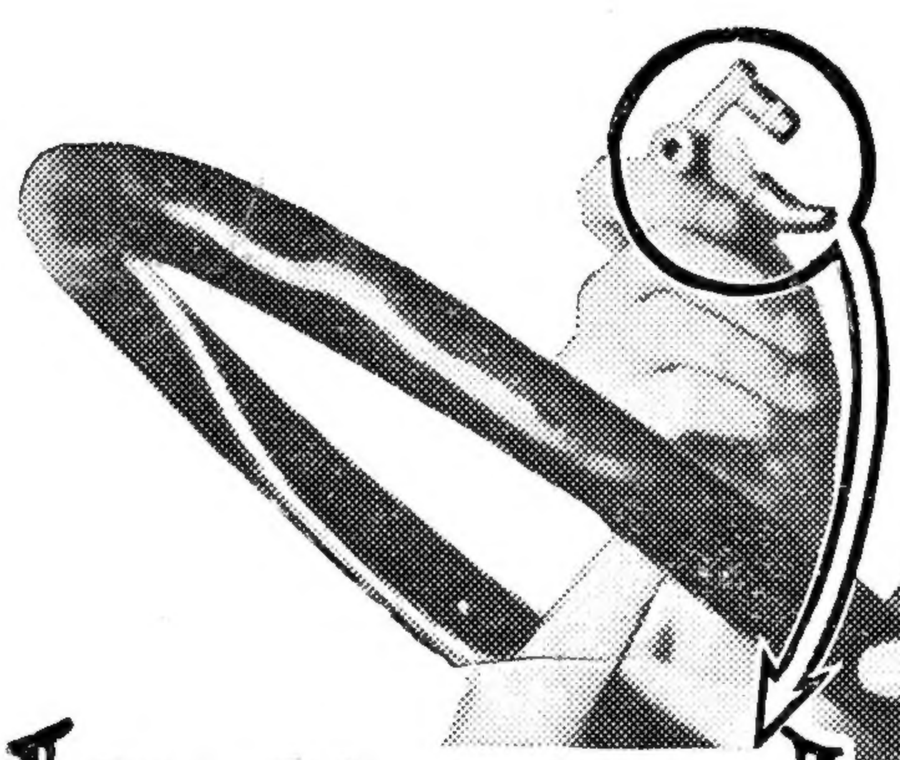


296 GAS MILES

492 GAS MILES



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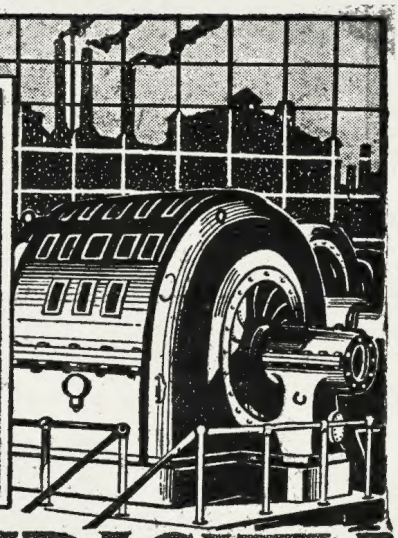

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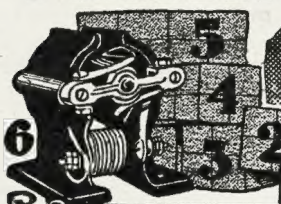

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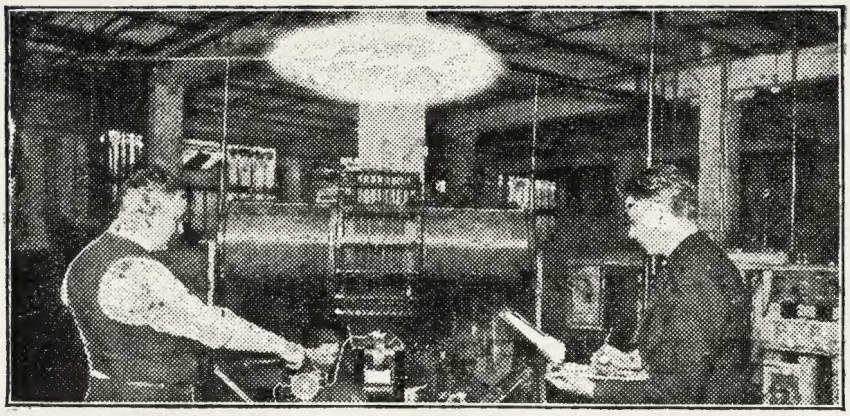

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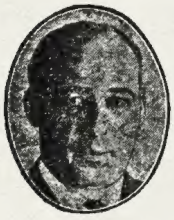

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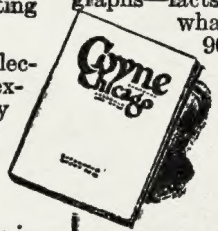

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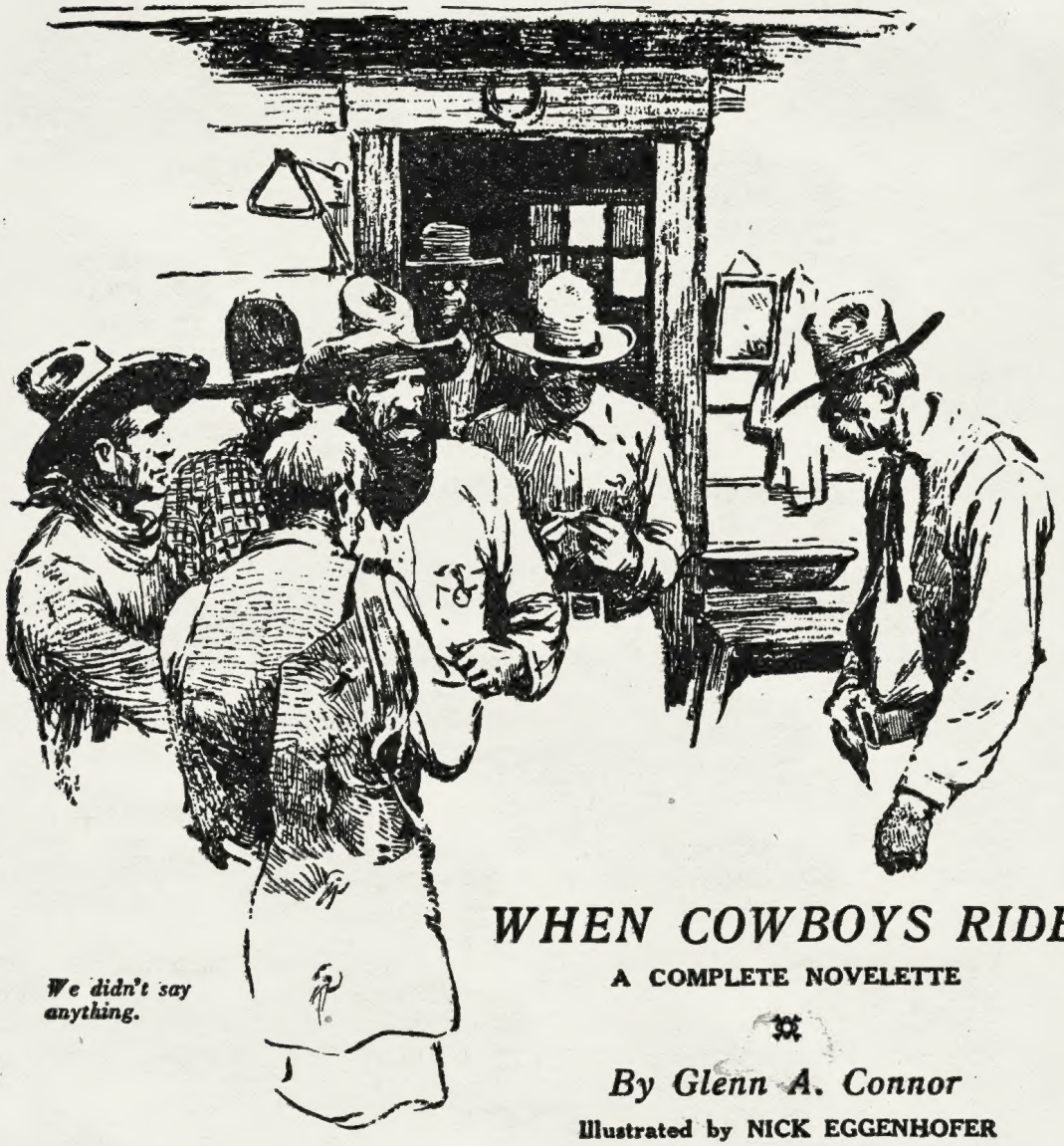


We didn't say anything.

WHEN COWBOYS RIDE

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Glenn A. Connor

Illustrated by NICK EGGENHOFER

The Diamond A waddies show just what can be done when a gang of cowboys plumb like their outfit.

"BOYS, I guess th' ol' Diamond A is registered tuh go flat."

These were the boss's words that greeted us as we come ambling out of the chuck house from breakfast. We paused, some shocked over this unexpected greeting, and looked old Tom Ball over to see if he was joking.

But his sober face gave the lie to any such conclusion. And I'm a-telling you, that look he gave us cut us right to the heart. There was regret pictured there, but regret having more to do with parting with us than the old outfit.

There wasn't but two or three among us that weren't old hands on the Diamond A, and to think the outfit had to go under struck us where we lived. And that ain't saying nothing in respect to old Tom Ball, the whitest boss a cow-polk ever rode under.

We didn't say anything, in fact we couldn't. The blow hit us so hard and unexpected it kind of stunned us. And this in spite of the fact we knew the Diamond A was due for just such a calamity sometime in the dim and indistinct future. Before we can make up our minds what to say that'll best sooth his feelings, he again speaks up:

"I can't ask you waddies tuh go on

ridin' for me for nothin'. But I want tuh say this much for you boys, yuh been a mighty square bunch of riders an' I appreciate. . . . Aw, hell, what's th' use of flatterin' yuh? Go on up tuh th' house. Th' missus'll pay yuh off."

Then, while we stands there like a bunch of boobs, he swings around and hurries off toward the barn. We looks at Wing—he's our range foreman—and Wing looks at us, and I guess them exchange of looks speaks plainer than any words.

"Why didn't yuh speak yuhr little piece, Joe?" I demands fiercely. "There yuh let th' ol' man go off thinkin' we're a bunch of ungrateful——"

"Speak hell!" snorts Wing. "How'n thunder did I know what you would-be cow-nurses had on yuhr minds?" But I realizes as well as Joe that he was as worked up as th' rest of us and words weren't possible.

"Well, what we goin' tuh do now?" demands Jack Mills, our herd boss when we're on round-up.

"Do?" Wing looks mighty thoughtful. "See here, fellahs!" he suddenly exclaims. "I been suspectin' something like this tuh happen as I guess th' rest of yuh have, only it comin' so sudden like this kind of knocked me off my feet. Now I'll tell yuh, I been doin' a heap of thinkin' of late an' a bit of nosin' around, an' th' boss *is* in hard straits—"

"Which we've already been suspectin' ourselves," I butts in dryly, "otherwise he wouldn't be cuttin' us loose."

"—but not as hard as he seems tuh think," continued Wing, shooting me a withering look. "Th' trouble with Tom, he's been cuttin' his beef too close. There ain't no profit in steers holdin' 'em 'til they're five or six years old, an' that's just what's busted him. High taxes an' overhead expenses has been double his profits. But ol' Tom is set in his views. Yuh can't make him believe there's any profit in shippin' a two, or even a three year old steer."

"All right, we get yuhr drift," says Mills. "Now what's th' answer?"

"Just this. By cleaning th' range I believe we would set Tom upon his feet again," replied Wing.

"Then let's clean th' range," I suggests. "It's most time for beef round-up anyway."

"Don't go off half-cocked," growls Wing. "There's a heap of things we've got tuh take intuh consideration."

"One is th' ol' man has ordered us tuh get our time," suggested Mills, like he thought this point unworthy of consideration.

"Exactly," agreed Wing. "An' I'm warnin' you fellahs not tuh take his words in th' simple way they sounded. Tom said he couldn't ask us an' he meant just that. In other words, he meant he wouldn't ask us nor countenance any action whatsoever on our part. An' I'll tell yuh why. He's flat broke, his credit's been cut off, an' his ranch an' ev'ry hoof of stock is mortgaged for ev'ry cent he c'n get on 'em."

"I guess that's why enough," breaks in one of the new hands. "I ain't ridin' for my health myself."

"Yuhr money is waitin' for yuh up at th' house," Wing informed him coldly.

But that hombre shows a sudden inclination to stay. He returns our hostile glares with a kind of sheepish, apologetic grin. "Shore, I wasn't meanin' that just th' way she sounded, fellahs," he says quickly. "If Ball is as hard as yuh say, I'm sure willin' tuh do my bit tuh help out."

"If yuh're with us, stay. But if yuh ain't, yuh better get out now while th' road's clear," grunts Wing. As for me I was hoping Wing would tell him to take his walking-papers anyway. Somehow I mistrusted the hatchet face and ratty eyes of this hombre. He hadn't been with us more'n a month, but it took a sight less time than that for me to take a dislike to this Tuck Dynes.

Wing sweeps the rest of us with them pale blue eyes of his that is suddenly registering zero weather. "If there's any more of you hombres that's doubtful 'bout goin' intuh this deal, speak up," he orders sharply. "I'm tellin' yuh blunt it's goin' tuh be without pay as far as I know, an'

decidedly a call on yuhr own cash assets."

Another one of the late hands steps forth, Jib Porter by name, and says, "I reckon them last two points disqualify me. Joe, I'd shore like tuh join hands with yuh but I'm a married man an' got a family tuh support. I reckon yuh understand. An' if there's anything I c'n do for yuh at any time——"

"Shore I understand, an' don't blame yuh none a-tall, Jib," says Wing, grabbing his outstretched hand and wringing it warm. "A man's family always comes first, Porter. Now just step up tuh th' house an' get yuhr time; an' good luck to yuh."

As soon as Porter was gone, Wing turns back on us. "Well, any more?" he demands, looking us over sharp. When none of us offer any excuses for drawing out, he goes on, "All right, we'll start devisin' ways an' means then." He looks thoughtful for a moment. "I guess th' first thing we better do is go up an' collect our wages an' have a little talk with Mother Ball," he decides.

"Say, Joe, if they're as hard up as you say, why not let them keep that money?" I suggests. "I'm willin' tuh donate my share."

It's sure funny how I had Joe Wing stirred up against me that morning. He gives me a pitying look, then snorts, "Curly, yuh shore are weak on headwork sometimes. What's th' matter? Ain't yuhr gray matter functionin' this mornin'? Yuh ought tuh know that Mrs. Ball or Tom, either one, would never consider such a proposition. Besides we're needin' that money, that is"—he looks me over kind of suspicious-like—"unless yuh're holdin' out on us with a substantial bank account. In that case we might consider yuhr——"

"Nothin' doin'," I assures him hastily. "Joe, I couldn't even draw my breath in a bank."

"That's that, then," he says decisively. "Our next move is up tuh th' house."

Mrs. Ball met us at the door with a brave smile, but that smile don't deceive us a bit when we caught sight of her red eyes. That little woman has been crying something scandulous, and in spite of that welcoming smile she greets us with, we ain't blind to the broken heart that lies behind it.

"Come right in, boys," she says cheerful enough, but there's a choke in her voice. We ditches our smokes, sweeps off our hats, an' shuffles inside, as nervous and miserable a bunch of riders as ever drew pay checks. I can't speak for the others, but I know as far as I was concerned it wouldn't have taken much more encouragement to have made me blubber outright. Mrs. Ball had been the same as a mother to us, mending our clothes when they needed it and just as quick to influence us in mending our ways when we needed it. Now seeing her facing this final issue with such nerve blame near caused us to lose ours.

I saw Joe swallow hard several times before he was able to speak, then his voice wasn't no more'n a hoarse croak. And this was our foreman who was cool under 'most any circumstances.

"Ma'am, Tom said—er—he sent us up here—tuh get our—money. He said—er—that is—er—er—aw, thunder, Mrs. Ball, fact is Tom fired us!" Wing made a sickly attempt at a grin.

Joe ended up so desperate-like, I guess Mrs. Ball thought he believed that. "Oh, no, Joe, not fired. Tom would never do that—to any of you boys. Maybe Tom said that to hide his own feelings. You see—it's our—condition. . . ."

The little lady choked off, trying to get control of her emotions that was threatening to get the upper hand of her. I could have kicked Joe who I held responsible for them tears that again come into her eyes.

But she soon bucks up and continues in a hurry like she's anxious to get the matter off her mind. "Boys," she says, and I can see her smile comes with an effort, "some of you have grown old in the service of the Diamond A, but in the years you have been here I'll bet there isn't a one of you that can recall having been paid with anything but checks. The Diamond A has broken this policy—on this last payday to you. . . ." Her voice

broke here in spite of her efforts to keep it calm.

We waited for her to continue, shifting uneasy-like, that "last payday" not ringing good upon our ears. I've often thought since what a lot of hard-hearted boobs she must have taken us for, standing there like a bunch of sheep-brained simps without offering her a word of encouragement when she was up against a stone wall, literally speaking. Our eyes wandered to the table that's well covered with paper and silver money. What did she think? That all that was on our minds was that cash?

Her eyes wandered in the same direction, and when she faces back toward us there is a smile again upon her face but I can see her lips is trembling.

"Boys, there is your money, real cash, and the first cash the Diamond A has ever paid its riders." The little lady walked over to the table and picked up a roll of bills and held it toward Wing. "This, Joe, is the two months' wages due you, one hundred and fifty dollars. I am not going to try to thank you—you know what you have been to this ranch. Sometimes I think if Tom were not so stubborn — had listened more to you — but there, I guess we needn't talk about that —*now*. What has happened is—no fault of yours."

Wing took the money and jabbed it viciously in his pocket, choking something that was meant to be "thanks." Then he whirls out the door and slams it shut behind him. Fifteen minutes more and every Diamond A hand has received his pay and has gone outside but me. Somehow or another I hadn't been able to get up the courage to face her for my pay yet. As the last back disappeared through the door, I seen the hurt look come into her eyes. She looks at that table that has suddenly become depleted of money except the little roll of bills that represents my share, like she's in a trance. Then she grows aware of my presence.

"Oh — oh, Curly, I — I almost forgot you. Here." She thrusts the roll of bills toward me. But I am stricken dumb. I stared at her like a wall-eyed bronc ready to stampede. Then I seen the big tears suddenly spring to her eyes and action comes back into my arms and legs.

"Mother!" In two strides I am by her side and got my arms about her shoulders. She looked up at me with a most wonderful expression.

"Curly! I—I never—had a son—of my own! But if I did——"

"There, there," I soothed her. "I got a father and mother over on the Twenty-Mile, and I haven't forgotten!"

"Is — is it that you — alone — understand?" The hurt in her eyes is like a knife stab in my heart.

"Not by a darn sight!" I exclaimed. "It's just that th' boys is too deep cut to express their feelings in words. Ma'am, don't you worry a bit. We're goin' tuh see yuh through this deal, th' last man of us!"

I am happy to see that troubled light has gone out of her eyes, but my last words has sure puzzled her. "I'm not worrying about a thing now," she says softly. "But — but what do you mean, Curly, seeing us through this deal?"

"Why, yuh don't think we're goin' tuh stand by an' see th' old Diamond A go under, do yuh?" I demands, like I'm a heap offended.

That little lady's eyes sure opens wide at those words. "Curly, what *do* you mean?" she sort of gasps.

But I figure I've said enough and I'll let Joe do the rest of the talking, me not knowing his plans. "Wait," I says, and hikes over to the door. I feels a bulge in my trouser's pocket and looks down. There is that roll of bills that Mrs. Ball has slipped in there unbeknown to me. Then I throws th' door open.

The gang is still out in the yard, and Wing has just made their rounds. From the looks of his hat, which he is carrying in his hands, he must have made them fellows come through with their last dime.

"Oh, Joe," I calls.

Something in my face must have worried him because he came a-running. I stepped back and motioned him toward Mrs. Ball.

"Joe, what is this mysterious talk of

Curly's?" she demanded a bit excitedly.

Wing looks at Mrs. Ball and then at me. "I let th' cat out of th' bag," I admits somewhat sheepishly. But instead of being peeved, Joe gives me an approving look. Then he turns back to Mrs. Ball.

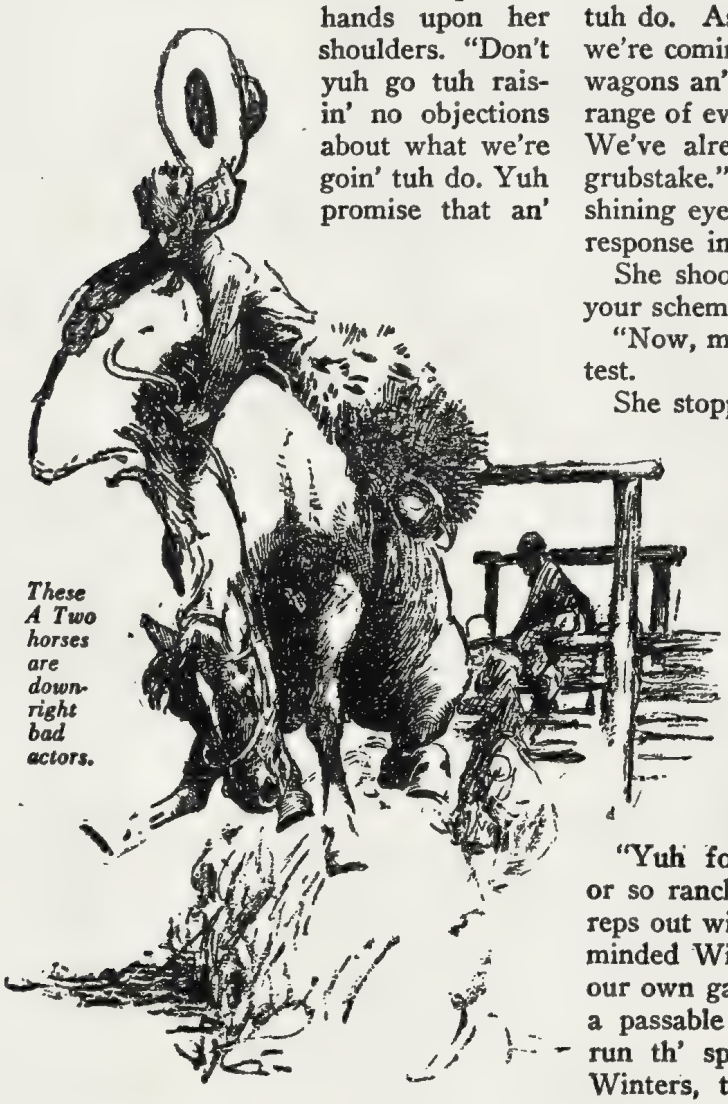
"What has Curly been telling yuh, ma'am?"

"Why—why, he said you boys weren't going to let the Diamond A go under!" She regarded Wing hopefully, anxiously.

"Why, shore we ain't," he assured her heartily. "Yuh don't think we're a bunch of pikers, do yuh, ma'am?"

"But, Joe, how.... What do you mean to do? What can you do?"

"Now, see here, ma'am." Joe walked over and put his hands upon her shoulders. "Don't yuh go tuh raisin' no objections about what we're goin' tuh do. Yuh promise that an' I'll tell yuh our plans if yuh want me to."



These A Two horses are downright bad actors.

"I'm afraid I am not in a position to offer any objections," she admitted sorrowfully.

"Well, we'll most likely need yuhr assistance so I'll give yuh th' whole lay," says Joe thoughtfully. "Th' first thing we must do is get rid of Tom, ma'am, an' I reckon that's where we'll need you. We don't want him around throwin' wrenches in th' cogs of our scheme. Isn't there something you could suggest, Mrs. Ball?"

Mrs. Ball eyed him curiously. "Why, Tom and I were intending to go see Tom's brother in about a week. John, you know, has a big cattle ranch in Arizona."

"Good!" Joe was instantly all enthusiasm. "Now here's what we're aimin' tuh do. As soon as you an' Tom is gone we're comin' back here, take th' round-up wagons an' th' saddle cavvy, an' clean th' range of ev'rything wearin' a Diamond A. We've already pooled our wages for a grubstake." Joe looked at Mrs. Ball with shining eyes, but there was no answering response in hers.

She shook her head regretfully. "Joe, your scheme is impossible. As much——"

"Now, ma'am——" Joe started to protest.

She stopped him with a gesture. "I'm not raising any objections," she hastily interposed. "It's the circumstances surrounding our condition. Joe, Tom's notes come due the middle of October on his ranch and cattle. It is now the middle of August. Don't you see how impossible it is? You boys could never cover all that territory in that short a time so short-handed. If you had more riders——"

"Yuh forget, ma'am, there's a dozen or so ranches in this country that'd send reps out with us if we notified them," reminded Wing triumphantly. "Now take our own gang here for instance. We got a passable wagon crew. Of course I'll run th' spread. Then there's ol' Dave Winters, too old tuh be much account

on circle any more, but th' best round-up cook that ever throwed a batch of grub tuhgether. Th' kid, Stubb Masters, 'll do for a hoss jingler. Ain't had much experience but a plumb bright kid. Then we still got our herd boss an' night-hawk with us, Jack Mills an' Tex Wisson, th' two best men in th' country for them jobs. Steve Caldwell is another old hand. I'll put him an' that new man, Tuck Dynes, on day-herd with Jack, alternatin' 'em until we get a gatherin' big enough so it takes th' three tuh handle 'em. Curly here knows this country like a book, an' c'n smell water ten miles off. I mean tuh put him in as wagon pilot.

"Now what better layout could yuh ask than that? That's eight of us, an' with a dozen or fifteen reps for circle ridin' I claim we'll cover a heap of country in a couple of months," ended Joe, well satisfied with his argument.

Joe and I both look expectantly at Mrs. Ball, certain sure she'll fall in line with them plans. But she don't look in no way convinced. "I tell you, Joe, your idea is impossible," she said bitterly. "You would have to have a buyer right on the spot to take these cattle, and then you couldn't sell them unless they brought enough to pay off this mortgage in full, which I very much doubt."

"We'll have th' buyer Johnny-on-th'-spot, an' they'll bring in enough to satisfy every debt," assured Wing confidently.

"But how can you round them up without horses or wagons?"

Wing and I looked at her blankly.

"I haven't been altogether frank with you, boys," she goes on hurriedly. "In view of this all-sacrificing interest you have shown, I am going to tell you everything. That money," she pointed to Wing's hat crammed with bills, "was advanced by Pete Banford to pay you boys off. Tom at first refused to take it. Not long ago he learned that Banford had taken up all his papers. We suspected sometime ago that he wanted this outfit. When we heard he had bought the mortgages, we knew what his game was right away.

"But Banford is a smooth talker. He argued with Tom that it was his duty to you boys to accept this money and pay you off. Of course that hit Tom on his weak spot and he swallowed his rancor and pride.

"That is about all, boys, except that Banford has foreclosed on the chattel mortgages, and our saddle stock and ranch equipment will be sold at auction this coming Saturday."

Well, that bit of intelligence left us stricken dumb. Wing never was gifted with a very sweet temper, and it wasn't hard for me to tell that right now he was in a murderous mood. If Banford had been present then—well, all I got to say I'd 'a' hated to been in that gent's shoes.

"Never yuh mind," says Wing at last, patting Mrs. Ball on the shoulder, and his voice is hard as steel. "Yuh bet we'll overcome this here difficulty somehow. I reckon we'll be goin' now, ma'am. I gotta get some place where I c'n think this matter over without seein' red, an' that's just how yuhr presence is effectin' me right now."

Wing frowns at me and nods toward the door. "Well, go ahead an' get rid of Tom as yuh suggested," he tells Mrs. Ball. "If yuh go 'fore I get around again, drop me a line with yuhr address at Logan Springs."

The gang has retired to the bunkhouse and is watching for us with considerable impatience. But Wing just waves his hand at them and draws me around the corner of the house out of sight.

"Well?" he demands, soon as he's sure there's no one within hearing. "What do yuh make of this, Curly?"

"I makes it out that Banford is givin' Tom a dirty deal," I answers slowly. "This thing of selling Tom's horses an' things, an' persuadin' him tuh pay us off looks like he means tuh tie Tom up proper."

"Exactly. An' right when th' fall round-up is due tuh start," says Wing bitterly. "Curly, sometimes yuh have glimmerin's of common sense. I got hopes now of yuh bein' useful tuh me. Let's me an' you shake this thing out."

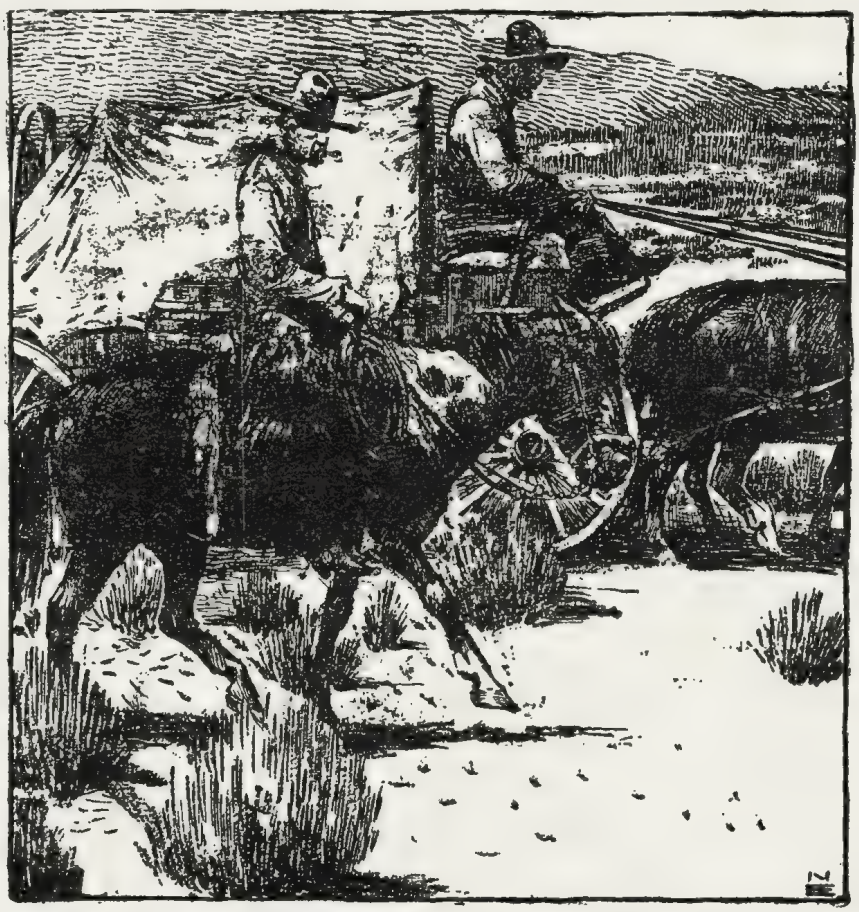
"Shoot, cowboy," I says, suddenly feeling mighty proud of myself. "I'm with yuh seven ways from Sunday. You make th' suggestions, an' I'll help yuh fight 'em out."

"Well, let's take an inventory of our private saddle stock first," he suggested thoughtfully. "I got three head of broke mounts; four head of hosses countin' Dago Red."

"A devil on four legs, Joe. Yuh'll have tuh eliminate him."

Joe shook his head like he didn't like the idea. "Steve could ride th' cuss on circle. A little rim-rockin' 'd soon take th' hell out of him."

"All right. I got two head. So's Jack Mills. Tex has got a private. Th' kid's got a couple of head of jackrabbits that'd probably do for him tuh jingle on. That makes 'leven head all told. Some cavvy tuh start on a round-up with," I said.



Perry Davis of the J Six is driving the chuck wagon.

Joe shakes his head again, and this time it's a mighty glum shake. "Then there's the chuck an' bed wagon hosses tuh consider," he muttered.

"Eight head at th' least—sixteen if yuh figger on mannin' this round-up inside of two months. Yuh shore gotta have a change," I murmurs thoughtfully.

"Well, it's a cinch we got tuh have more hosses," growls Joe. "Curly, use yuhr thinkin' cap. Where we goin' tuh get 'em?"

Wing speaking like that did set me to thinking, and what was more natural than my mind should revert back to the days when I rode for the A Two outfit, whose assets and liabilities consisted wholly of horses. I'd rode for the outfit for four years, and if I do say it myself, I used to have quite a drag with the old man.

"Joe, how many horses we goin' tuh need all told?" I demands sudden-like.

After thinking the matter over for a minute, he answers, "I reckon a hundred head would see us through in good shape. Can yuh make th' raise of that many?" he asks anxiously.

"I can," I says, "or double that many."

Joe is so overcome with joy he grabs me and starts waltzing me around. "Hold on," I protests. "You ain't heard th' worst yet. I reckon we c'n get 'most any number of horses from th' A Two but

we'll have tuh break 'em out ourselves."

"What!" Wing looks at me aghast.

"Fact," I says, then goes on to explain. "Hell, Joe, yuh don't think there's an outfit in th' country that'd give us a cavvy of broke saddlers tuh use on a round-up for nothin'? But I know old Saul will give us any amount we want for the duration of this round-up just tuh get 'em broke out. What do yuh say?"

"What can I say?" grumbled Joe. "It's our only chance that I see. A hard proposition to handle, but I guess it c'n be did. In fact it's got tuh be did. Listen, Curly," he says abruptly, "how long would it take yuh tuh get them hosses in form with th' gang? So a man c'n handle 'em within reason? Yuh know we c'n use our own hosses for workin' herd an' night guards."

"Give me a week," I says, "an' we'll have real circle hosses made out of some of 'em."

"Good. That'll give me about time tuh look up wagons an' get 'em equipped, an' tuh find a buyer. Let's see, it's sixty-five or seventy miles to th' A Two. You fellahs c'n make it yet tuh-day by hard ridin'. What'll be yuhr nearest postoffice?"

"Moran."

"All right, I'll write yuh at Moran tuh let yuh know how I'm comin'. But unless I write yuh different, we'll figger on startin' out next Thursday following tuh-morrow. Now get goin' with th' gang. Yuh're in charge 'til I get there. An' see that yuh make every man hit th' ball."

IT was right close to midnight when we rode into the corrals at the A Two, as tired and short-tempered a bunch of riders that ever throwed a leg over the back of a cayuse. Consider riding over seventy miles of as rough country as God ever conceived, without a bite since that morning, and wonder!

My knowledge of the A Two stood us in good stead now. In a mighty short time we had our mounts watered, stabled and fed, and were trooping for the long, low building, standing back in a grove of cottonwoods, that represented the ranch house. The gang was for going right to the bunkhouse and rolling in, some backward about awakening the inmates in the ranch house at this ungodly hour.

But not so me. Having rode for the outfit for four years, I was too intimately acquainted with old Saul to have any such compunctions. But it wasn't the cravings of the inner man clamoring for food that set my footsteps so unhesitatingly in that direction so much as it was to learn how our luck was holding up. And I had my mind made up to learn all about it this very night.

My sharp rap brought an almost instant response in the way of grumbles and curses. You see I knew right where Saul slept, or where he had slept for the past twenty years, and I reasoned he must still be sleeping there, and I rapped upon the window that didn't stand over a foot from his nose. As soon as I heard his feet strike the floor, I hits back to where the gang is waiting. A few minutes later his familiar, tall, gangling form is framed in the doorway.

At my greeting he ducks down and peers at me closer in the moonlight that's almost as bright as day. You see Saul is in the neighborhood of seventy-five now, and his eyes ain't as good as they used to be.

"H'lo thar, Curly," he greets me vociferously. "Thought I knew that voice. What th' tarnation yuh doin' here — an' this time o' night?"

"Lem, we're a bunch of well-meanin' but hungry cow waddies that's rode all of seventy miles tuh-day an' without a bite tuh eat since early this mornin'," I informs him with feeling. "Is there any show tuh get a hand——"

"Come on in, come on in," he cuts me off heartily. "If we can't find no grub cooked up, we'll 'rouse th' ol' woman."

"No, don't do that," I hastily interposes. "We got our own cook in our midst," I assures him, as we troops into the house, "only we didn't have no grub for Dave Winters tuh cook."

In five minutes old Lem had a fire crackling merrily in the big range, and half an hour later we're bending our legs beneath a table loaded down with big platters of beefsteak and fried spuds. Hun-

gry? We fell to like a pack of wolves after a winter's famine, and we didn't let up until every platter was as empty as our stomachs had been a short time before.

Having cleaned my plate for about the fourth time, I pushed it back and faced old Lem with my mission. I admit I'd been some worried, but I don't know why I should. Putting my proposition up to him was like offering a nice juicy worm to a hungry trout. Yes, sir, old Lem just swallowed my offering hook, line and sinker. His answer is plumb satisfying to me. I calls the gang's attention and nods my head towards the door.

"Out that door an' sharp to th' left," I tells them. "Follow yuhr nose for about a hundred feet an' yuh'll strike th' bunkhouse." I looks to Lem for further information.

"There's shakedowns aplenty for yuh all," he acknowledges.

As soon as the gang has disappeared, I turns again to Lem. "How many hosses yuh got up here?" I demands.

"Thirty—maybe thirty-five," he answers.

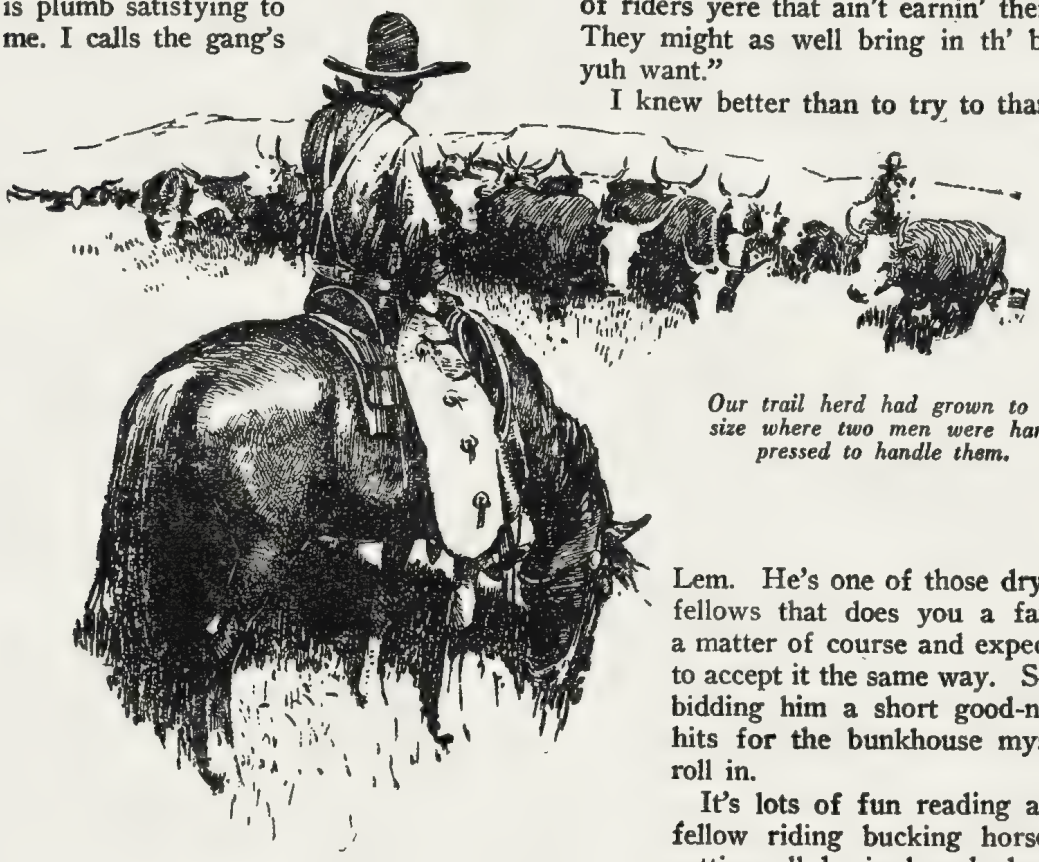
"Good enough," I exclaims. "I'll start part of the bunch in on 'em first thing in th' morning. Then I'll go out with th' kid, an' maybe ol' Dave, an' round up th' balance."

"Tom Ball in pretty bad shape, hey?" quizzed Lem gruffly.

"Broke flat if we don't get his stuff gathered 'fore th' middle of October," I returns frankly.

"Hm. Well, you let them hosses on th' range go," growls Lem. "I got a couple of riders yere that ain't earnin' their salt. They might as well bring in th' balance yuh want."

I knew better than to try to thank old Lem. He's one of those dry, gruff fellows that does you a favor as a matter of course and expects you to accept it the same way. So after bidding him a short good-night, I hits for the bunkhouse myself to roll in.



Our trail herd had grown to a size where two men were hard pressed to handle them.

It's lots of fun reading about a fellow riding bucking horses and getting all bruised and shook up, and it's more fun watching them. But when you find yourself in that fellow's shoes, the pleasure kind of fades out. Of course we had some fun; we laughed and made biting remarks about each other's abilities, but they were made at the other fellow's expense. Work? You bet it was work; and hard work. When it got so dark we couldn't distinguish which end the horse's head was on we'd quit, so stiff and sore we could hardly limp to the bunkhouse. And before morning showed the first

faint glimmerings of daylight, we were hard at it again.

That week passed like a nightmare. These A Two horses are all good blocky chunks, not long in learning their stuff, but downright bad actors the first two or three times they are topped off. Aching muscles and unstrung nerves give us no peace at night, and you bet them wall-eyed broncs sure made it interesting for us during the day.

But at the end of the week we had the satisfaction of passing seventy-five head as suitable for range work. Now that's passable fair for five cow waddies that hasn't had no practice any too recently, and only one real bronc fighter in the bunch, the same being Steve Caldwell. That boy would rather ride a bucking horse than sit down to his three squares a day, and I'm not backward about admitting we let him have the brunt of topping gee, haw, and whoa, and they was some fine behavers, too.

Then there was old Dave Winters was too stiff and stoved up, and the kid, Stubb Masters, lacking age and experience, which eliminated them from any active part in turning out these saddlers. But old Dave, with the kid for an assistant, showed us what he could do with a pair of lines. In the week they turned out twenty head of graduates in the art of gee, haw, and whoa.

On Wednesday night following our arrival at the A Two, Wing puts in an appearance with two spanking new round-up wagons and full new equipment. Perry Davis of the J Six is driving the chuck wagon, the fellow on the bed wagon is a new one to me, but that bunch of reps bringing up their rear with Wing in the lead is all familiar faces to me. In their rear is still another fellow bringing th' cavvy.

I admit I am completely and wholly dumbfounded. Wing pulled over to one side and beckoned me over. "What's botherin' yuh most, cowboy?" he grins down at me tantalizing-like, but I can see he is plumb happy and contented with himself.

"You bein' *here*," I says, trying to hide my curiosity. "I wasn't lookin' for you down here, Joe."

"Well, I decided we'd better start our spread right from here," says Joe. "Tom's got quite a number of critters ranging up in them Shawnee Hills. That's th' reason I neglected tuh write yuh."

"I can understand these reps bein' here then," I says, my desire for enlightenment getting the best of me. "But damned if I understand how yuh got ahold of this shiny new outfit!"

"That," chuckles Wing, "is a long story, but I'll give it to yuh in as few words as possible. Up north of the Black Thunder Hills I stumbled upon a right big outfit, owned by one Sam Buckley, one time friend and saddle mate of Tom's. He took me for a driftin' puncher an' offered me a job. Then I told him I was ridin' for Tom Ball an' he shore went up in th' air. Said it was th' first time he'd heard of Tom in twenty-five years. Boy, I shore struck it lucky! Soon as I found out him an' Tom was ol' cronies, I unreeled th' whole hard luck yarn. Lord, that ol' man went hog wild!

"'That damn snake, Banford, tryin' tuh do my ol' pard, Tom, is he?' he howls. 'By God, I'll show 'im!'

"Then he gets quiet as hell, an' don't say nothin' for nearly fifteen minutes. 'Wing,' he says at last, 'I been aimin' tuh stock up heavier for some time now. You go ahead an' round up Tom's stuff an' I'll take 'em at standin' market prices. I'll show that damn short horn Banford what it's like tuh play th' low-down on a friend of Sam Buckley's! An' I'll be at th' Diamond A th' mornin' of th' fifteenth of October tuh receive 'em!'

"Well, Curly, he likewise equipped us with this new outfit, claimin' increasin' his herds like this was goin' tuh compel him tuh run two spreads. So there yuh are! He takes the outfit back when we're done!"

RIDE? I'll say we rode! We hit the saddle while the stars were still twinkling and rode till they twinkled again. In less than a week we had the Shawnee Hills cleaned out and was

sweeping across the Walker Creek Flats. In ten days we invaded the first of the Pine Ridge breaks that was the beginning of the roughest country God ever created. Already we had begun to feel the pace, man and beast alike. Those A Two broncs we started out with were right down docile and gentle now.

At the end of three weeks our trail herd had grown to a size where two men were hard pressed to handle them. I had rode with Wing for several years, the Diamond A was known all over the country as a hard riding outfit, but never before had we covered such a large scope of country as we had in the past three weeks, in the same length of time. And never before had I seen our foreman so hard boiled and so merciless in his driving.

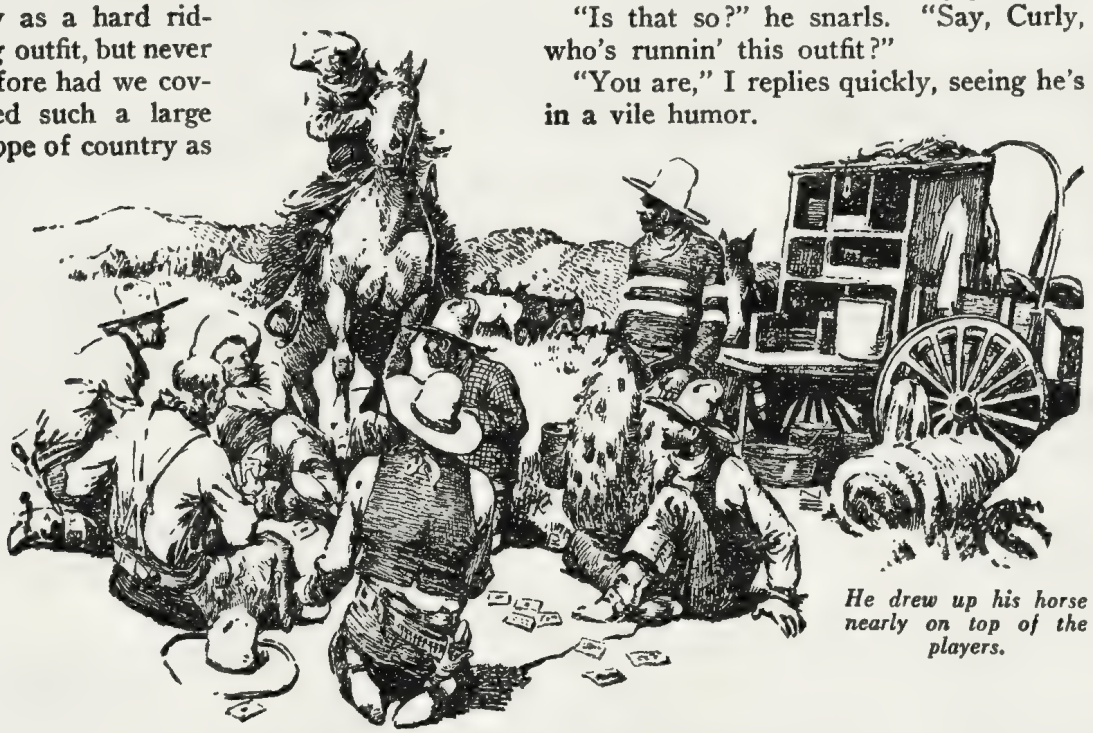
Not that he drove any of us Diamond A hands or had to. We were just as much heart and soul in saving the old Diamond A as he, and he knew it. In fact the only attention he paid us was to give us some occasional crisp orders.

No, it was the reps he was driving, and in a way that was causing a high tension of feeling. They were resenting it too, not openly, but with mutterings among themselves. Nevertheless their attitudes threatened disaster to our hopes. I felt a break or a relief must come in this tension soon, and I grew several gray hairs worrying over its outcome. The former occurrence would spell our doom, while the latter. . . . Well, I wondered how it could be brought about. What puzzled me further was Wing's evident blindness to this condition.

One night in desperation I drew him aside out of hearing and put in my protest. "See here, Joe," I exclaims. "I realize th' value of time as well as you do, but I believe you're makin' a sad mistake drivin' these fellahs th' way yuh are."

"Is that so?" he snarls. "Say, Curly, who's runnin' this outfit?"

"You are," I replies quickly, seeing he's in a vile humor.



He drew up his horse nearly on top of the players.

"All right, let me run it my own way, then," he snaps. "So long as I'm runnin' this spread, these hombres're goin' tuh ride *my* way. If they don't. . . ."

He didn't finish, but I knew his meaning. They could either ride his way or not at all. This independent way he seemed to look at it sure staggered me. But a look at his set features told me further argument was worse than useless. As I looked up he had turned his face in the direction of the riders sitting around the camp fire. In its flickering light that was cast even here where he stood, I could see the grim, stern lines of his face and a subtle something else that startled me. Unless I made a mistake,

Wing was as well aware of the reps' attitude as I. What, then, was the answer? If he knew their attitude why did he persist in making it more precarious?

The answer was given to me the next day. I found myself on the rim-rock circle with Wing. The two of us were alone. Wing checked his mount at the point of the ridge that looked down into a big basin known as the Poison Sinks, its dry beds of alkali glittering in the rays of the mid-day sun.

"That Dynes——" he commenced, and broke off abruptly. I looks up to see him regarding his saddle horn with a black scowl.

"What about Dynes?" I demands, instantly interested.

Wing looks up and regards me out of eyes closed to mere slits. "Curly, you never seemed to like Dynes. Why?"

"Damned if I know," I says, looking at him blankly.

"What's yuhr opinion of him?"

I shakes my head doubtfully. I don't like to condemn a man just account of his looks, yet there was no denying my dislike for Dynes that, so far as I knew, had originated from just that source. "He just struck me as kind of a snake in the grass," I answers slowly. "But——"

"I'm suspectin' he's more than that," Wing interrupts me sharply. "Curly, I believe Dynes is a spy of Banford's."

It's my turn to be surprised again. In short I'm downright startled. "What makes yuh think that?" I manages to ask.

"Just this," Wing goes on. "'Member that rep of Banford's that come to us 'bout a week ago? Well, that very same day I saw them meet on a distant ridge while we were out on circle. I couldn't recognize 'em at that distance with th' naked eye, but I knew that would be about the country that Dynes and this new rep would be coverin'. Again I thought it strange they should meet at such a point, an' neither one had any cattle in sight. So I dug out my field glasses to see what I could see."

"Well?" I demands impatiently, as Joe pauses.

"Curly, something changed hands down there. Maybe it was money, maybe it was something else. But I cling to th' idea it was money. Why? Dynes was supposed to have given all but some small change sufficient to supply himself with th' makin's for our grubstake, wasn't he? Well, how's it come he's been flashin' some pretty sizeable bills in them poker games they been holdin' recent of nights? If he's been holdin' out on us, how come he ain't flashed 'em sooner? An' if he ain't holdin' out, how come he's takin' money from Banford's rep?"

"Joe, yuh've hit it," I ejaculated, sure that Wing's deductions were right. "I thought ever since that morning Tom broke us th' news an' Dynes made his crack an' then reneged, that he was up tuh some dirty work. But what th' devil's his game?"

"His game?" Wing laughed bitterly. "It ain't *his* game, Curly, it's Banford's! I thought it was damn funny if that money shark would let Tom's outfit slip through his fingers so easy.

"Listen, Curly," he goes on harshly, "you haven't even got a hint of all that's goin' on yet! I been watchin' Dynes pretty close an' I got reason tuh think him an' Banford's rep is doin' all they can tuh disorganize our crew. I b'lieve they're even *buyin'* some of them reps. I been watchin' them poker games pretty close an' I see fellahs flashin' bills that was supposed tuh be broke when we started out.

"That's th' reason I been drivin' 'em! That's th' reason I been drivin' 'em harder this past week! I'm expectin' a break 'most any time. I had tuh get out of this country. If we c'n hold out four more days, we're saved!"

"Saved?" Wing's last words were as clear to me as mud.

"Yes. In four more days we should hit the K Y wagons. They round up the balance of th' territory we yet got tuh cover. That's what I been figgerin' on all th' time an' th' reason why I started our spread down in th' A Two country as I did."

Well, there's one of the reasons why Joe Wing is one of the best round-up foremen in the state, just because he uses his head. I'm willing to bet there wasn't a

waddie in the outfit that even dreamed of this way out for us, not even Banford for that matter. If we could meet the K Y wagons, the rest of our problem would be easy. All Wing would need do was to send a rep with the K Y. The rest of us could start with the herd we'd already gathered for the Diamond A. Elated? I'll say I was. And with just cause!

But my elation was short lived. When we got back to the wagons we found our nemesis already at work. Two men were holding our morning's gathering. The rest were gathered about a spread tarpaulin near the chuck tent, playing poker.

Wing stopped for a minute to give orders to the nearest man holding herd to bunch them. Then motioning to me to follow, he galloped on into camp.

Never did I see a man's face depict such passion as did Wing's as he drew up his horse nearly on top of the players. He glared down at them for a minute in silence. The glances they sent back were uneasy but at the same time contained a hint of defiance.

"Hey, you!" Wing finally roars, the knuckles of his fingers gripping the reins showing white. "Think I'm runnin' a poker dive?"

There's none of them got an answer to this. Their eyes wander around kind of embarrassed-like and come to rest on the cook tent. I looks up and jerks erect. It's Banford!—walking toward us with that bland, oily smile of his. I looks around quick at Wing, and I can see he's no less shocked than I am.

"You, Banford, what'cha doin' *here?*" barks Wing, his face getting suddenly white. I notices with a start that his left hand has dropped to the stock of his Winchester in his saddle scabbard.

"None of that, Joe!" I exclaims, laying a restraining hand upon his arm. "They'd hang yuh just as quick for killin' that snake as they would if he was human!"

Joe flung my hand aside with a furious gesture, but I knew I'd brought him to his senses. His hand fell away from his gun stock and gripped the saddle horn instead.

"Why, ain't visitors welcome in yuhr camp?" asks Banford with that smirking grin of his. But Wing's next words sure wipes it away.

"Not you!" he gritted. "Banford, th' sooner yuh relieve us of yuhr presence, th' cleaner'll be th' atmosphere. Now get goin' 'fore I cut loose an' stomp th' gizzard out of yuh!"

"Just a minute, Wing," he sneers. "I'll be goin' probably all too soon tuh suit yuh, because when I go th' majority of yuhr men are goin' with me. But I got a few words tuh say to yuh first. I forbid yuh runnin' these wagons another day!"

"Since when, Banford, have I been takin' orders from you?" demands Wing, fair shaking with rage.

"These cattle are mine! Everything wearing a Diamond A brand is mine! Do you understand?" snarls Banford, suddenly losing his oily manner.

"Since when?" demanded Wing, suddenly cool again.

"I've got a mortgage on everything th' Diamond A owns!"

"Which ain't due 'til October fifteenth," retorts Joe sharply. "Remember *that!*"

"Remember nothin'. Them papers c'n never be taken up!"

Wing and Banford glares at each other like a couple of mad bulls. Them reps is so altogether taken up with the conversation that they don't hear nothing else. But me, although I'm considerably worked up over the deal, am not utterly deaf to other sounds. The drumming of horses' hoofs cause me to look up.

Never did I look upon a more unexpected or welcome sight. Not a hundred yards away approaching at a fast trot was Tom Ball and another gent whose whiskered face was strange to me. They had drew up to within a hundred feet before I turned back to the others. It suddenly occurred to me who this other stranger might be.

"Say, Banford, did you say those mortgages on the Diamond A would never be taken up?" I asked purposely loud.

"Never!" he thundered, and smacked his fist in an open palm to emphasize his word.

"Yuh're a liar!"

Never did I see amazement, shock and consternation depicted in so many faces at one time. Wing straightened up as though someone had suddenly biffed him one under the chin. "Tom! Buckley!" he ejaculated weakly. I knew my deductions had been right.

Banford was staring at the two with dropping mouth and protruding eyes. "Banford, yuhr money is waitin' for yuh at th' bank when yuh deliver them papers." It was Tom speaking now, and his tone registered about fifty below. "Now get goin', yuh black-hearted coyote. Yuhr presence stinks up th' atmosphere!"

Banford cringed back like a whipped cur. With drooping shoulders he turned about toward his horse tied to a wheel of the bed wagon. As he swung aboard, Wing turned to Banford's rep, who was looking somewhat pale and uneasy.

"You, Yingling, cut yuhr string out of that cavvy an' get goin' with yuhr boss!" he snapped.

Yingling looked quickly about at the circle of faces. As if that were their cue for action, several dived hands into their pockets and throwed the results of their investigation at the feet of Yingling. With a baffled curse and a black look about, he snatched up the crumpled bills and the handfull of change and jammed them in his pocket. As Wing swung from his saddle with a threatening look, Yingling rose hastily to his feet and hurried to the rope corral where our cavvy was already milling inside.

"Stop up at th' herd an' get yuhr partner, Dynes," growled Wing at him. "Tell him we don't need him no longer. An' as for his wages, tell him he c'n collect off th' man he's been workin' for ever since he come tuh th' Diamond A."

"Well, they ain't got fur tuh ride," remarked Buckley whimsically. "Banford's wagons is back here 'bout six miles." I glanced at the reps' faces at this remark and saw them flush guiltily. Sure, they must have been aiming to join Banford's outfit this very day but had undergone a sudden change of heart the way things turned out.

"That reminds me," says Wing. "What th' hell you fellahs doin' here?"

"Well, tuh make a long story short," chuckles Buckley, "I had my doubts about you boys makin' connections, so I hunts Tom up, let's th' cat out of th' bag, an' th' two of us puts our heads tuhgether an' straightens this business out. But I shore apologizes to you boys. Tom said he had th' hardest ridin' bunch of waddies in seven states, an' damned if I ain't willin' tuh go him one better an' make it eight." Then he turns to our boss and asks, "Say, Tom, when do cowboys *ride?*"

Tom don't answer at once. He slowly looks us over, his faded old eyes unusually bright. "Sam, when their outfit threatens tuh go under."

That answer is plenty good enough for us; not in its wording, but in the way it was expressed. I reckon them reps felt somewhat repaid for what they had endured up to date, and certainly deserving of a word of credit.

THE OLD "YALLER" SHIRT

By Ray Humphreys

He was squirming in the sea-sick saddle.

Illustrated by
NICK EGGENHOFER

A real cowboy never quits.

THAD SOWERS, blue-eyed, bronzed-faced, professional broncho buster for the John O'Day Traveling Rodeo Circus, stood six feet seven in his high-heeled, pearl-etched riding boots and his big, two-gallon, mouse-gray Stetson. He was a goodly sight to look upon, decided John O'Day himself, except for one thing—Thad wore an old "yaller" silk shirt that had seen its best days.

"See here, Thaddy," suggested the rodeo circus owner, softly, that day in Alamosa, where the John O'Day Traveling Rodeo aggregation had halted its Colorado trek to put on an afternoon "Wild West" performance, "what's th' idear o' wearin' that thar ol' dandelion-colored silk shirt until it falls offen yuhr shoiulders? Seems to me yuh've wored it ever since th' circus season started."

Thad's boyish face lit up with a slow smile, but he held his tongue. Like almost every other real knight of the leather, Thad was no orator. He did his daily broncho busting stunt silently, generally, and drew down his princely salary of $50 a week. But he never had much to say. Now, challenged directly on a rather personal matter by John O'Day himself, Thad had nothing to say.

"Gosh knows, Thaddy boy," went on John O'Day, crisply, "yuh got most men skinned four miles from Sunday when it comes to lookin' like th' big he-man what yuh are. But, fer th' love o' Mike, get shet o' that ol' yaller shirt. It's faded. It's wored around th' cuffs scandalously, too, an' it ain't th' right color at all fer a bronk peeler doin' professional rodeo actin' in Colorado. 'Yaller' ain't no popular color in Colorado. It might do well enough in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, whar we was performin'——"

"It's clean," suggested the tall cowhand, gently.

"Sure, sure, but it ain't showy enough no more," said O'Day, getting angrier. "Yuh go buy yuhrself a new shirt, boy, mebbe a bright red one, or a dazzlin' blue one. Yuh look jest like a ol' withered cornstalk in a November field with *that* thing on."

Thad flushed. He was slow to take offense, but O'Day was getting pretty roughshod, he thought. However, O'Day was the big boss, and O'Day was also the proud father of June O'Day, the prettiest little slip of a girl Thad had ever met. So Thad fidgeted with his hat and decided not to fling any "sass" back at O'Day.

"Sir," said Thad, softly, "I—wal—I picked up this yaller shirt in—in Topeka, Kansas, th' second week our show was on th' road—an' I—wal, I kinda got used to it, an'. . . ."

O'Day grunted disdainfully.

"I'd be ashamed to admit that!" he snapped, authoritatively. "Now yuh git busy, right this minnit, an' git yuhrself another shirt—a pink one, a green one, a orange one, but *no* yaller."

"Sir, I'd rather not——" began Thad, solemnly.

"What?"

"I says I'd rather not—git no new shirt," repeated Thad, lamely. "I like this ol' yaller one, sir. Kinda got set on it. . . ."

The proprietor of the John O'Day Traveling Rodeo Circus snorted. He had learned that snorting trick, perhaps, from the string of mean bronks he carried along with his show. When O'Day snorted, it meant a storm ahead. The teamsters all knew that; the canvasmen knew it; the other performers knew it; and Thad knew it, too.

"Yuh git a new shirt for this afternoon's performance," roared O'Day, loudly, "or yuh ain't got no job here no more worth mentionin', yuh understand? Juan Quijano, that Mex rider, kin take yuhr place easy enough, I figger! Why—why—say—my daughter—my gal June—I should think fer her sake, an' fer th' sake o' th' other wimmen o' th' troupe, that yuh'd spruce up a bit now and then!"

Thad's eyes lit up with a curious light. He swung on O'Day abruptly and seized the circus owner by the arm.

"June's been makin' some wise cracks about my shirt?" Thad demanded, swiftly. "Is *that* what yuh're drivin' at?"

O'Day, who had a sneaking suspicion that June's name might turn the trick for him, hesitated. But the light in the big bronc peeler's eyes awed him. The circusman coughed for time.

"No, not 'xactly," explained O'Day. "But ef she thinks same way as I do—why, o' course— I don't know. . . ."

Thad's face grew suddenly dark.

"I don't care who don't like my yaller shirt. . . ." he began, but John O'Day's voice cut in on him. O'Day was as sore as Thad. The circusman shook a big fist under his star performer's nose.

"Yuh git yuhrself a new shirt, that's all!" roared O'Day, and he turned and strode off, muttering swear words that he didn't dare fling into Thad's teeth. Thad shrugged and sat down on a saddle. It was fairly cool in the big horse tent, but Thad felt like he was burning up with a fever.

He was. The nerve of O'Day to start a fight over a man's yellow shirt. Thad looked at it earnestly. He stroked his left sleeve with a big hand. A nice shirt—a swell shirt—getting old, of course, but still serviceable. Then Thad thought of June O'Day and his brows puckered. Such a nice little girl. . . .

"June couldn't o' said nuthin'," moaned Thad, unhappily, and he shook his head. When Juan Quijano came in, whistling a tune from below the border, a few minutes later, there were tears in big Thad's eyes. Juan wondered; but Thad said nothing. He sat there on the saddle and waited.

Minutes passed—an hour—two hours. Thad heard the dinner gong from the mess tent. He didn't move. The gang returned from lunch and Thad still sat on the saddle. It was not until the GRAND OPENING PARADE for the afternoon performance was assembling that Thad stirred.

He got up and threw the saddle on the back of the big white-maned, cream-colored stallion he rode, and put on the fancy silver bridle. He mounted and rode out of the horse tent. Three minutes later he was heading the opening procession through the big exhibition tent, packed with anxious spectators.

John O'Day, mounted on a big bay horse, rode on Thad's left, frowning. On Thad's right rode a slim blonde girl of nineteen or so, June O'Day, the princess of the show. She was mounted on a pinto that danced to the band music. She smiled at Thad, and Thad smiled back. Then Thad heard a grunt from John O'Day.

"Still sportin' that ol' yaller shirt!" growled O'Day, from one corner of his mouth. "Wal, yuh know what I said—draw yuhr time!"

Thad tossed his head indifferently.

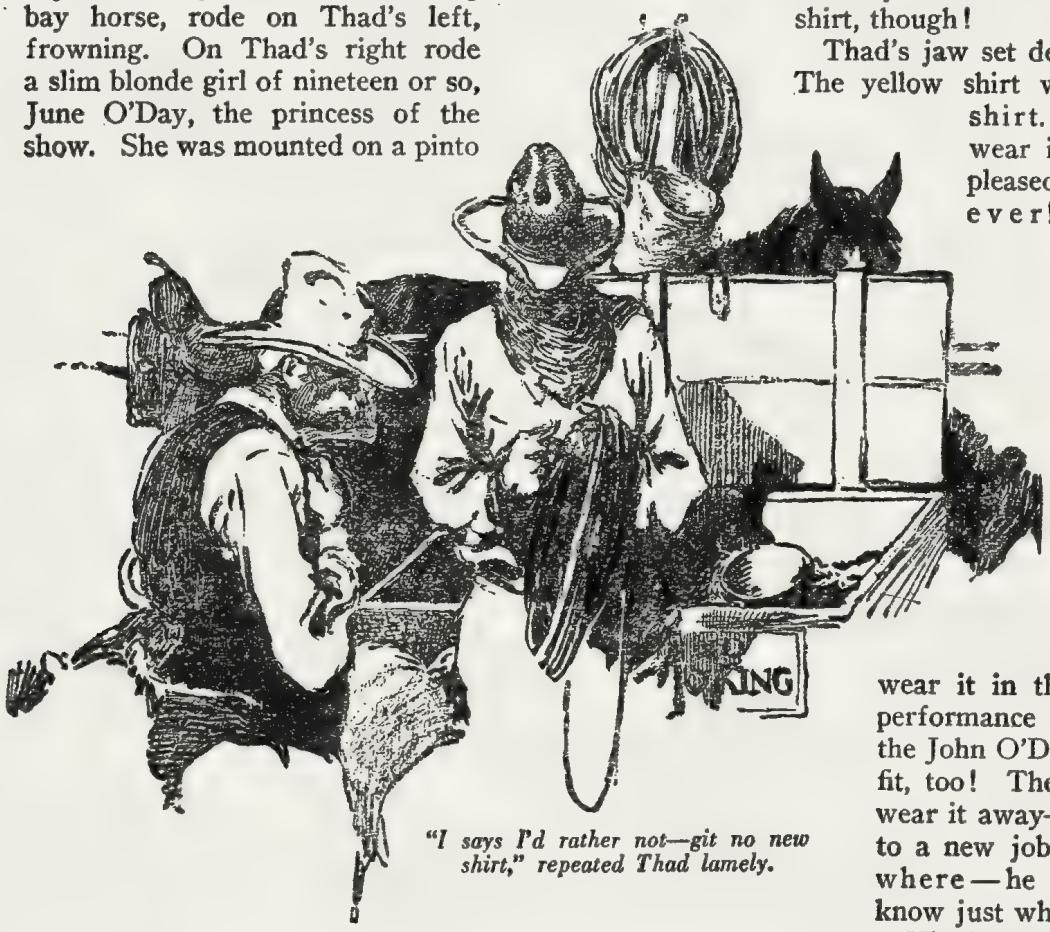
"Sure," he said, dropping his voice to a whisper, "but I ain't dirty, boss. I'll finish the afternoon program—give Juan a chance to be prepared. I'll blow after th' performance."

"Good!"

"Agreed!"

With the parade over, Thad retired again to the horse tent. He was in low spirits. He hadn't anticipated such a sudden dismissal even though he had been warned. But then. . . . He shrugged. It was all in a lifetime. Too bad to lose a show job over a yellow shirt, though!

Thad's jaw set defiantly. The yellow shirt was *his* shirt. He'd wear it if he pleased—forever! He'd wear it in this last performance with the John O'Day outfit, too! Then he'd wear it away—away to a new job somewhere—he didn't know just where.



"I says I'd rather not—git no new shirt," repeated Thad lamely.

His thoughts grew darker. He sat on the saddle and waited. Juan Quijano, the other bronk rider, swaggered in. He hailed Thad.

"Yuhr turn, Thad!" cried Juan. "Th' big boss made me ride fust to-day, Thad. Yuh not bein' on time fer th' rides, I rode two o' th' string, too!" Juan's voice swelled with pride. "Th' big boss says as how yuh go away, Thad, an' that I am to take yuhr place soon. That is news."

Thad stood up and stretched lazily.

"Yuh'll do well, Juan," said Thad, softly. "Yuh got my best wishes, kid. But ef yuh've rode two o' th' show buckers

already, what am I goin' to ride? That ol' sunfishin', dead-like sorrel, I guess, or mebbe th' trick mule. Or is thar some bird out thar with a hoss that kain't be rid that wants to git——"

Juan grinned.

"That's it, Thad," said the Mexican lad. "Thar is a guy outside with a gray bronk. Says nobody ever rid it. Asked th' boss to use it in th' show—an'. . . ."

"Why didn't yuh try it, Juan?"

"Would have," said the Mexican, readily, "but th' guy no want me. He say he want big feller in yaller shirt to ride his hoss an' wanted to bet $500 yuh couldn't. Th' boss wouldn't take th' bet, but he agreed to let yuh ride th' hoss."

Thad grunted. Canny old O'Day, taking no chances! Perhaps, thought Thad, O'Day figured he might throw the ride—let himself get tossed—just so O'Day would lose the bet. Thad straightened up suddenly. What if he was discharged—unjustly, too! He'd still retain his honor. He'd ride any horse and ride him to a finish, discharge or no discharge!

It was part of the daily program of the John O'Day Traveling Rodeo Circus to have its star riders—either Thad or Juan—ride any strange horse that was brought in. Several such animals had been ridden each week the show had been on the road. In Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, the horses so entered had usually been easy customers for Thad or Juan to handle. They were merely unbroken animals.

But of late, as the show had toured Wyoming, Utah, and was now working through Colorado, the type of bad horses brought in to be ridden had changed considerably. These real Western bronks were genuine outlaws, many of them, and both Thad and Juan had had some stiff rides of late. But Thad didn't mind.

Thad entered the big top. He heard John O'Day, who acted as ring master, bawling out his customary announcement: "This here tall gent in th' gray hat, an'—an' the ol' yaller shirt, is nobody else but Thad Sowers, one-time champion broncho buster of the Monte Vista rodeo, an', ladies an' gents, with yuhr kind permission, he will now attempt to ride a gray hoss that has been brought in to us to-day from th' open range by Mister—Mister. . . ."

O'Day referred to a card in his hand.

"By Mister Bernard Harley o' Little Owl Creek, Colorado," went on O'Day in his loud, sing-song voice. "An' Mister Harley, who is some bronk peeler hisself, is authority fer th' statement that no livin' man has ever yit sat straddle o' this gray outlaw fer more'n a half minute. But, ladies an' gents, as a added attraction to this afternoon's performance, Mister Thad Sowers will attempt to ride th' gray hoss. Keep yuhr eyes on Mister Thad Sowers an' that gray outlaw, both o' which will be tanglin' up thar in th' middle o' the arena just as soon as th' hoss wranglers kin git a saddle on that slippery gray devil!"

There was thunderous applause from the crowded seat sections. Mr. O'Day smiled and bowed. He walked stiffly across to where Thad waited for the gray to be saddled. O'Day stuck out a hand to Thad.

"Wal, Thad, good luck!" said O'Day, abruptly. "I would o' let Juan ride this critter an' saved yuh th' trouble, but this Harley gent insisted th' man in the 'ol' yaller shirt' ride his gray, so I consented. But I placed no money on yuh. So—wal, if yuh feel like th' gray is gittin' too hot fer yuh, yuh kin slide off, an'—an'—wal. . . ."

"What?" growled Thad, doubling his fists, at the insinuation.

"Nuthin'," said O'Day, hastily, "'ceptin' look out fer th' gray. Harley says he's a mean devil—damned smart."

Thad turned away. His face was flaming. O'Day, too, had flushed. O'Day walked out of the arena. He met Harley just inside the heavy arena railing. Harley was smirking. He held a roll of bills.

"Too scared o' yuhr stockyards cowboy to bet he won't ride my gray?" asked Harley. "I give yuh a las' chance to bet."

O'Day pulled out a wallet. He had no doubt but that Thad would ride the gray to a dishrag finish, and besides, O'Day's conscience hurt him. He had needlessly wounded Thad's pride by insinuating

Thad might throw the ride. O'Day peeled off greenbacks until Harley said enough and the bet was made. Harley made some remark about Thad's yellow shirt that O'Day didn't catch, for at that moment June O'Day had come up and the circus owner turned to her.

"Just bet $500 on Thad," said O'Day, shortly. "An' June, it's his last ride fer th' O'Day outfit."

"Why, daddy!" exclaimed the blue-eyed girl, catching her father's arm. "What do yuh mean Thad's last ride fer us?"

"He's—he's quit!" stammered O'Day.

The gray horse was ready, O'Day, ignoring his daughter's questions, climbed up on the arena railing and addressed the crowd.

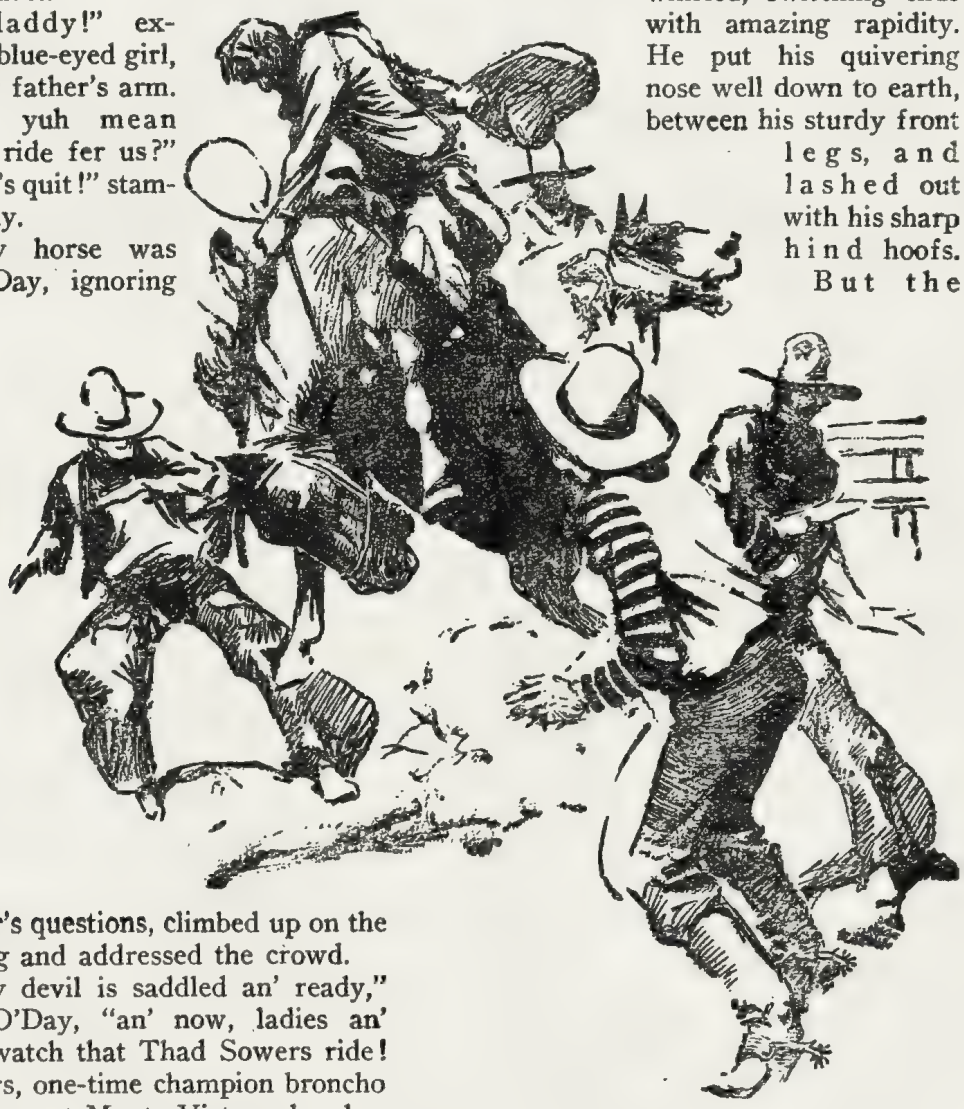
"Th' gray devil is saddled an' ready," sung out O'Day, "an' now, ladies an' gents, yuh watch that Thad Sowers ride! Thad Sowers, one-time champion broncho buster o' th' great Monte Vista rodeo, has never been throwed in th' time he has been with this circus! He will ride that slippery gray as easy as most of us old folks kin ride a rockin' chair. Keep yuhr eyes on Mr. Thad Sowers an' that gray!"

Thad swung into the saddle. . . .

Immediately things happened. The gray squealed in angry challenge and seemed to go sky-rocketing straight up in the air. The wranglers, alert and catlike as they were, fell on all sides. The speed of the broncho had taken them by surprise.

Straight up went the gray and then he landed on four stiff legs with a thud that seemed to shake the very earth. But the tall rider stayed with him. The gray whirled, switching ends with amazing rapidity. He put his quivering nose well down to earth, between his sturdy front legs, and lashed out with his sharp hind hoofs. But the helpers had scrambled to safety. Then the gray reared, and Thad, a grin breaking across his tired face, "raked" the broncho with a grand sweep, rolling the biting rowels of his spurs from the gray's shoulder almost to his rump.

"Fight, yuh devil!" roared Thad in challenge.



Immediately things happened.

"Ride 'im, cowboy!" whooped the crowded stands.

And the gray seemed to understand all that. He blew fiercely through distended nostrils, squealed through wide jaws, again flashed high into the air, switching ends as he came down, and landing with a crushing impact that fairly bounced the tall puncher in the saddle.

Again a silver spur flashed and the gray seemed to swell up with fury. He nosed for earth, whirled, stumbled, spun dizzily, and then tore across the arena in a series of jack-rabbit jumps that seemed to jolt even the entranced spectators. He wheeled, skidded, seemed to slip to one side, recovered, switched ends again, and came thrashing back furiously towards the center of the arena to the mad applause of the crowds.

O'Day's trembling hand closed over his daughter's little hand.

"That gray," breathed O'Day, "is terrible. He's——"

"Ride 'im, Thad—ride him!" screamed June O'Day.

Thad was riding. No one knew that better than Thad himself. He realized that he was making the ride of his life. And the gray—up, down, up, down, like a bobbing toy balloon went the wild gray, first this way, now that. It had cleared the arena of all the helpers. The waiting pickup men had fled in disorder. The great grandstands were silent now in awe.

The gray seemed tireless. His wicked little eyes were blood red. He squealed again, defiantly; altered his mad career in mid air, and charged straight at that section of the arena railing where John O'Day stood with his frightened daughter, June.

Whoosh—whoosh! Creaking saddle, snorting outlaw, grunting rider, passed down the rail like a nightmare. O'Day shrank back involuntarily as the whirlwind blew past. The gray's hoarse squeals filled the air. Thad's face, O'Day saw, was tense and drawn. He was squirming in the sea-sick saddle and his eyes were half shut. Terrible punishment. The gray knew its stuff. In a moment now. . . .

Thud! The spectators came up to their feet to a man, and a great groan echoed through the big top. The mad gray had gone headlong into the railing and was down, on one side, its plucky rider pinned to earth.

But the gray was not through. It was up again in a flash. The crowd's groan turned to a welling cheer as Thad came up with it, in the saddle. But Thad's face was white.

Then the gray did something that few in that big audience had ever seen a broncho do. It swung its head quickly, with bared yellow tusks, and nipped at Thad's left leg. Thad squirmed and rapped it on the nose with his hat. More bucking, more squealing, more hell-raising. . . .

Harley came up and touched O'Day on the shoulder.

"That feller in th' yaller shirt," said Harley. "Great jumpin' tadpoles, but he's a rider! That yaller shirt—that——"

"Shut up!" growled O'Day, unhappily. "Ef that gray falls again, or rolls, I'll—yes, I'll kill yuh, Harley!"

The gray came thrashing across the arena again, still vigorous, still determined to do its worst or die fighting. Straight at the arena rail again soared the leaping gray and two lengths from it he seemed to tie himself up in a knot. He went up in a whirling pinwheel of twists, and came thudding down on limber front legs that appeared to give away under him.

He went to his knees. Then to his left shoulder. And then down completely, accompanied again by the groans of the spectators. But the gray was right up again, fire in his bloody eyes. He squealed, lowered his head, and charged the rail—1,200 pounds of mad horseflesh.

He went like a cannon-ball, the rider sagging in the saddle, and then came the crash. The arena rail was too strong to splinter. It cracked—that was all. The gray crumpled up, staggered, fell over, and smacked its rider down to the hard ground with it.

"Kilt!" screamed Harley, jumping the rail.

O'Day jumped the rail, too. Other

showmen swarmed into the arena. They reached the gray outlaw, sprawled on its rider.

The gray was dying. A broken neck. The man it had crushed beneath it in its final fury was limp.

They dragged Thad out from under. His face was bloodless. A doctor came bounding up. Strong hands lifted the unconscious puncher and bore him away, with June O'Day clinging to one of Thad's very cold hands. They took him into a side tent, where the doctor made his pronouncements.

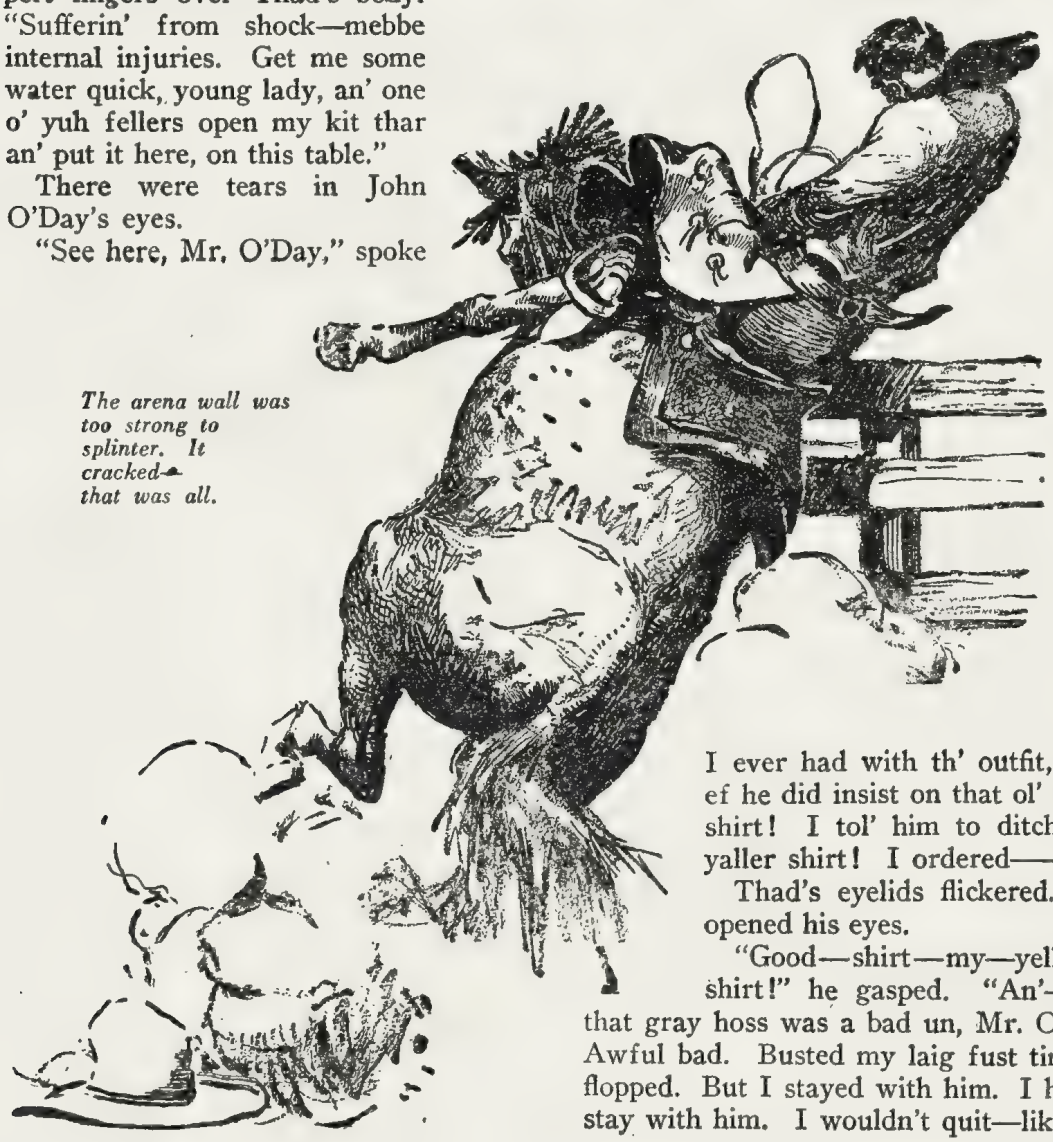
"Broken laig, fer one thing. Yep, an' three busted ribs, too. Crushed bad—very bad!" droned the doctor, running expert fingers over Thad's body. "Sufferin' from shock—mebbe internal injuries. Get me some water quick, young lady, an' one o' yuh fellers open my kit thar an' put it here, on this table."

There were tears in John O'Day's eyes.

"See here, Mr. O'Day," spoke up Bernard Harley, who had brought the gray outlaw into the show to be ridden, "here's yuhr money, an' mine. Yuhr man won it fair an' square. Th' gray hoss kilt hisself or he shurely would o' kilt yuhr rider in th' yaller shirt. I—wal, I'm sorry fer yuhr man. I—my conscience hurts me. That gray hoss was made bad by a bunch o' Mexican riders who tortured him, an'—wal, that hoss always hated yaller. Th' Mexes taught him that, it seems. He wasn't bad except when he saw yaller, an'——"

O'Day seized Harley by the arm.

"Yuh rat!" cried O'Day, chokingly. "Yuh knowed all that, an' yet yuh tried to git my top rider kilt! Him, th' best man



The arena wall was too strong to splinter. It cracked—that was all.

I ever had with th' outfit, even ef he did insist on that ol' yaller shirt! I tol' him to ditch that yaller shirt! I ordered——"

Thad's eyelids flickered. He opened his eyes.

"Good—shirt—my—yellow—shirt!" he gasped. "An'—wal, that gray hoss was a bad un, Mr. O'Day. Awful bad. Busted my laig fust time he flopped. But I stayed with him. I had to stay with him. I wouldn't quit—like yuh

thought I might. No, not as long as I. . . ."

O'Day dropped the scared Harley and dropped to his knees beside Thad's improvised cot.

"Honest, Thad, I never meant I thought yuh'd quit on me!" cried the circus owner, brokenly. "Honest I never did. Why, I bet $500 on yuh—an' won it! But yuh're bad hurt, Thaddy boy. Yuh never should o' stuck after that fust fall. Ridin' that gray with a busted laig—yuh should o' hollered fer help. Yuh—yuh did more than yuh should o' done, lad."

Thad's eyes roved around the anxious circle of friends that hemmed him in. They sought and found the eyes of June O'Day, and then Thad smiled wearily. He looked again at John O'Day.

"Am I—still—fired?" he asked, softly.

"Damn no!" exploded John O'Day, hotly. "Yuh're part an' parcel o' John O'Day's outfit as long as yuh wish to put up with us!"

"An' th' ol' yaller shirt?" asked Thad, weakly. "Kin I still—wal—kin I still wear it, sir, even ef it is gittin' old?"

"Yes, yuh kin wear it ferever ef yuh wanta!" roared O'Day, trying to hide his emotion under a pretense of great fury. "I'm sorry I ever spoke about it, Thad, even ef wearin' it almost did git yuh kilt to-day. Keep on wearin' it, ef yuh want. Wear it ferever!"

Thad's white face took on a flush of color.

"Thanks, boss," he said, simply, and his trembling hand reached out and closed tenderly about the small hand of June O'Day. "Yuh see, I got that shirt in Topeka, Kansas, like I once told yuh. Miss June, here, gave it to me, sayin' it would bring me good luck, an'—wal—I reckon it has, fer I think it's—it's brought me June; hasn't it, June, dear?"

"Yes!" said June, fervently.

And the crowd of circus hands, realizing that something had to be done, did the only thing they figured was appropriate. They cheered lustily, loudly, while John O'Day, unmindful and unashamed now of the tears that coursed his rugged cheeks, bent over and put his hands around the clasped hands of June O'Day and Thad Sowers. It was a parental blessing. The girl laughed happily, and even the bruised and crushed Thad chuckled.

The doctor, a roll of bandages in his hands, straightened up.

"He'll live!" he grinned. "Fer look what he's got to live fer!"

WHEN A COWBOY GETS LOST

COWBOYS do get lost, sometimes. There are any number of instances where men have gone out on a strange range to round up a lot of strays, and have been days getting back to the round-up camp. Getting lost doesn't mean a great deal to the average ranny except that he may have to go hungry for twenty-four or even forty-eight hours. They all know that sometime they will be able to find their way back because their sense of direction and their many infallible directional guides are bound to help them out sooner or later.

All cowboys are adept sky readers. They know the stars, not by name perhaps, but by groups and location, at certain times of the year. But even when stars and sun fail as directional guides, they have a number of other signs to help them. Where there are close stands of timber, they, like the woodsmen, look for the moss that always grows on the north side of the trees, away from the sun.

Where there are no trees, and nothing save widespread prairie with the sun and stars obscured, the cowboy tells direction by the way the grass is bent. The summer winds are generally from the southwest; that is, prairie winds blow from that corner of the compass more consistently than they do from any other direction, and the grass is always bent toward the northeast.

Then there are two other almost infallible directional signs cowmen depend upon. They are the Occident and the Thatching ants. The Occident ant, found from Colorado south through New Mexico, Arizona and Texas, throws up big mounds of coarse gravel and sand, and in nearly every instance leaves an opening on the southeast side of the mound, presumably so that the rays of the early morning sun will enter the doorway the first thing and warm the myriad of tunnels inside. The location of an ant-hill doorway is almost infallible. A consultation of three ant mounds, and there are generally several within reasonable distance of each other, will be certain to show two with their entrances located in the same direction, which is bound to be the southeast. The Thatching ant covers its mound with a mass of small sticks and grass blades, but, like the Occident ant, always has its doorway facing the southeast.

"What was it—a tornado or a ton o' dynamite?"

THE BEAUTY GENT

By Paul Everman

Illustrated by ARTHUR HEINEMANN

He wasn't han'some, but he was a man, an' a sensitive one.

WHEN me an' four o' my cowhands rode up to the home ranch, that spring evenin', an' spied Shorty Bain staggerin' towards us from out o' the tumble-down blacksmith shop, we savvied that mysteerous happenin's had been under way durin' our absence, an' that Shorty had been a victim of either liquor or violence.

"Shoot me for a polecat!" I yells, starin'. "How come yuh to be wearin' yore face upside down, Shorty?"

Shorty, he's my six-foot-four cowhand. His shirt was tore plumb off. His long nose was spread all over his face. An' he'd been bleedin' free an' uninterrupted.

"We got a visitor," sighs Shorty.

Yuh see, I'd left Shorty in the blacksmith shop to fix up a busted windmill-fan, that afternoon, while I took Socks Murphy an' Breakfast Bacon an' Mike Michaels an' Buster Kelly with me over to the neighborin' S Bar.

Me, I'm Frosty Adams, an' I owns the 4 P Z outfit, outside o' five hunderd cows an' twenty-odd sections o' grazin' land that ain't paid for yet. The S Bar boys was plannin' to trap a wild-hoss band what'd been stealin' off mares from every other outfit in our part o' the country. They was buildin' long pole-wings that'd turn the fuzz-tails into a big corral when they was sashayed down from the mountains. An' I'd took these hands o' mine over to help build the trap.

"A visitor?" I says, repeatin' Shorty's words, while he dams up his nose-freshet with the back o' his hand. "What was it—a tornado or a ton o' dynamite?"

"Wuss," answers Shorty, plaintive-like. "He's built like an ox. He kicks like a mule. He claws like a wildcat. He stands up on two legs, an' speaks in a voice what's almost human—though yuh wouldn't think it to look at him."

"What's his name?" I barks.

"Don't ast *me!*" sniffs Shorty. "I ast him—that's how come me to lose a good shirt an' git the pegs knocked from under my nose! He waltzes in a minute ago, sayin' he wants to work for wages at this ranch. I tells him the boss man's away. He opines he'll set down an' wait till you

gits back. I tells him my name is Shorty Bain. He says 'Glad-meet-yuh,' but he's bashful about disclosin' his own moniker. Purty soon, sociable-like, I asts, 'Let's see —what'd yuh say yore name was?' He grunts like a bull, an' I think he didn't understan' what I said. So I repeats, 'Let's see, stranger—what'd yuh say yore name was?' Boys, he jest give one beller, an' proceeds to crawl my frame. Tell me," begs Shorty, "is my nose on straight?"

I laffs at him. Shorty, he'd always imagined he was a extraordinary scrapper, an' it looks like he's changed his mind complete. Thinks I, mebby I'll jest hire this stranger. I kin use him.

"Aw, don't git funny," Shorty grumbles when I laff.

"If I get as funny as you look," I grins, "I'll shore quit the cattle business an' join up with the funny-papers! Shorty, yuh look like yuh'd been pulled through a knothole."

This here stranger was a-standin' against the 'dobe wall o' the bunkhouse, an' it jest about took that hull wall to make a fittin' frame for his picter. He was a big beefy jigger with a little round cougar-head cocked up on top o' heavy shoulders that yuh could have carved sirloin steaks off of. He wore a pair o' chewed-up chaps. His boots was run over at the heels an' had been patched so many times that the tops was all halfsoles.

Folks, I asts yore pardon if I takes a little time describin' this gent. Somebody inquired last week if I'd ever been to Niagary Falls, an' I replies no, an' I never expect to, 'cause I've already seen the greatest marvel o' the age. This gent was *it!*

His hair was the color of a ripe carrot. Some folks has trouble keepin' the hair out o' their face. But this feller had trouble keepin' his face out o' his hair. What I mean is that his hair was so thick an' heavy an' long that it kinda mashed his face down an' made it undersized. If a barber'd seen that head o' hair enterin' his shop, he'd either 'a' fainted dead away or else called up his wife on the telephone an' told her not to expect him home till next week.

The face that adorned this stranger wasn't no prairie posy neither. His chin took up so much room that there wasn't much left for eyes an' nose an' ears. There he stood—his beefy cheeks a-shinin', his little ears drawed back, his little eyes a-glintin' at us.

Us 4 P Z gents pauses to admire this wonderful specimen what had drifted into our midst.

"Ast him what his name is," Shorty Bain dares me.

"Howdy, stranger," I says, steppin' forward. "I understan' yuh're lookin' for work."

"Yep," comes the answer. "I'd hoped to hire out with the Harness outfit, over west, an' had made all my plans thataway. But they tell me their range force is filled. So I come over to hit this here outfit up for a job."

"Where's your hoss?" I inquires.

"Ain't got no hoss," he answers, shakin' his pink head. "I done walked over."

"Ain't ever worked any in this range country before?" I asts, an' he says no, but he's rode for outfits up in the north part o' the state.

"Well," I tells him, "I reckon I can take yuh on. Frosty Adams is my name. What's yores?"

He skinned his thick lips back over his teeth, an' snarled like a cougar. But he decided not to hit me jest yet.

"Air you the boss o' this outfit?" he growls. When I nods, he tames some. "All right, he says. My name's 'K.' "

"K-A-Y?" I spells. "Is that it?" I was thinkin' that must be it.

"Yuh don't spell it," he says, flat. "Yuh jest *say* it. 'K'."

My punchers ain't able to restrain speech concernin' this stranger's marvelous appearance.

"If I had a face like that," swears Breakfast Bacon, who's plumb fascinated, "I'd charge two-bits admission to see it, an' live a life o' luxury!"

"Yessir," agrees Socks Murphy, who's equal impressed. "That mug's a map o' the badlands if I ever seen one!"

But the stranger don't 'pear affected none whatever by these remarks. I was

surprised that a feller what seemed so sensitive-like about his name didn't give a durn what was said about his looks.

"Stranger," I remarks, thoughtful, "'K' 's a most extrordinary name! It reads more like a cattle-brand. I'm afraid some o' the boys on this ranch ain't learned their alphabets up as high as that letter. So I suggests that we call yuh somethin' else that ain't so formal-like.

"For instance," I goes on, "this long-cared jigger here, Bacon by name, is called 'Breakfast' 'cause them two words is always served together. This freckled Irishman is called "Socks" Murphy account o' him never bein' known to wear any. The feller with the mournful mustache we calls 'Mike' Michaels, for reasons easy understood. Yuh've already met up with our six-foot-four cowboy, who we've humorously elected as 'Shorty.' 'Buster' Kelly, here, is so-called account o' him bein' the official bronc-buster o' this ranch family. So it seems to me," I winds up, "that we ort to select a easier an' more convenient name for yuh, stranger, than jest 'K'."

"'K' 's my name," growls the newcomer away down deep in his chest. (Did I tell yuh he had a chest like a barrel? If I did, I take it all back. His chest was like *two* barrels.)

At this point, Buster Kelly steps forward like a man inspired.

"Frosty," says he, "I've took the raw edge off'n every bronc on this ranch for two years now. An' it's been my privilege an' custom to give suitable names to them broncs. I takes great pride in my ability along that line," saye he, "an' I craves the honor o' namin' this stranger."

"Shoot!" I says.

Buster sweeps his admirin' eye over the big carrot-headed gent, an' points straight at him.

"I name him 'Beauty,' " he states simply.

I slaps my thigh in appreciation. "Yuh never named a hoss better!" I declares.

But that big beefy stranger explodes prompt an' dangerous.

"Beauty?" he howls, jumpin' high in the air an' swingin' his fists. "Beauty?"

He sweeps down on Buster like a tornado. He grabs him by the collar, bats him on the jaw, an' then slings him half way through the 'dobes o' the bunkhouse.

An' don't think that Buster Kelly's any baby chee-ild! He's a long, lanky, tough, strong-armed boy with a fightin' heart. But he don't have no chanct with that grizzly pawed stranger.

"Excuse me!" I says, smashin' the barrel of my forty-five down on that carrot-head, just as he was about to stomp on Buster an' cave his ribs in. He went down like an earthquake an' took a nap.

But I decides to hire him anyways. I had an idea he could punch cows, an' I needed a hand.

"We'll call him 'K'—to his face," I tells the other boys. "If any o' you wants to call him 'Beauty,' that's yore own hard luck. If he's tryin' to keep his real identity hid, it's his own business. Mebby he's some kind of an outlaw, travelin' under a Elias. An', while I ain't runnin' no ol'-soldiers' home for poverty-struck outlaws, I'm ready to take a chanct on hirin' this han'some stranger if he proves up a good hand."

Beauty rubs the lump my six-shooter left on his head, an' says dazed-like that he reckons he'll take the job I offers him.

"But make these jiggers leave me alone!" he growls, pointin' to Buster an' Shorty. "They better not ast me no personal questions, nor call me any funny names. My name's 'K'!"

I loaned him a saddle, an' he made a first-class cowhand. But I kept him at the home ranch most o' the time, doin' chores that the other boys felt beneath their dignity. An' he never complained.

Meantime, I had the other boys helpin' the S Bar fellers complete the long pole wings for their horse-trap. We'd had reports that the hosses in the wild band was purty g'ant, account of a hard winter, an' the trap was built so clever that we figgered the whole bunch could be sashayed right into captivity afore they knowed what was up. A big blaze-faced sorrel stud was boss o' the band. It was him that'd been stealin' off mares from the ranches roundabout. We figgered if we could get him corraled oncet, we'd put a stop to sech goin's on.

"I seen that stud oncet," remarks Breakfast Bacon, as we clumb on our hosses ready to start over to the S Bar, one mornin'. "He's jest about Beauty's size, an' his hair's the same color——"

"Shoot me for a polecat!" I interrupts him with a yell, turnin' in my saddle. "Lookit! There's Beauty—an' he's busted loose again!"

An' he had! Bein' as we had a good congressman in our districk, we got mail delivery from Jennison three times a week. The mail-carrier's flivver had jest dusted away from our mail-box. Beauty stood there with a couple o' letters in his hand. He puts one in his pocket an' starts towards the main house with t'other one.

It's Socks Murphy, my freckled, pug-nosed Irish hand, what starts him on the prod.

"Get a letter from yore sweetheart, 'K'?" yells Socks, in a plumb friendly way.

"Sweetheart?" bawls the Beauty gent. "Sweetheart?"

He lets loose a beller from that double-barreled chest o' his. He lowers his little round cougar-head, an' charges. One sweep o' his grizzly paw knocks Socks plumb out o' the saddle.

He grabs Socks an' squeezes him till the bones crack. Then he begins tossin' him twenty feet up in the air. No sooner does Socks hit the dirt till he gets tossed again. The first time, Socks lights on his feet. The next time, he hits in a sittin' posture an' looks pained. An' I'm plumb certain that if he goes up the third time, he'll come down on his head an' his neck won't stand the strain.

I spurs in between, an' throws my forty-five on Beauty's handsome features.

"Jest subside!" I advises him.

"Make that freckle-faced Irishman keep his mouth shet!" he bawls, showin' his teeth.

"It'll take more'n *you* to shet my mouth, yuh lop-eared, yeller-bellied cross between a elephant an' a jackass!" croaks Socks, game.

Shoot me for a polecat if them insultin' words o' Socks don't tame Beauty complete! He axually 'pears to enjoy 'em a whole lot!

"Shake, pard!" he grunts, shovin' his paw out to Socks. "But don't yuh never ast me no personal questions again!"

I admit I couldn't savvy the gent. An' when Old Man Joel Harness, who ranges over north o' me, called next day, I was stumped worse'n ever.

Old Joel chaws his long white mustache an' asts me if I got a feller what answers Beauty's description workin' for me. I admits the charge.

"Wal," says Joel, "he done tried to git a job with me afore he showed up at yore place here. Said he'd heerd I was needin' riders bad. He was even so shore I'd take him on that he'd ordered his mail sent in care o' my ranch. I'll speak more about that later!"

It seems that Beauty's marvelous looks had struck the funny-bone o' one o' the Harness cowboys. An' said cowboy had tried to hurrah him, with some sech well-chosen words like: "Say, honey-bunch, I bet them bee-ootiful features o' yourn shore makes a hit with the girls!" Right *pronto,* Beauty had started to take that cowboy to pieces an' hang his hide on the fence. An' Joel says he'd shore 'a' done it if the other punchers hadn't drove him off at the points o' forty-fives.

"I ain't been able to find out what this plug-ugly's name is," says ol' Joel. "My daughter Carrie knows, but she won't tell. An' this is how come: He showed up at my place yestiddy mornin' jest after the mail-carrier left. Carrie had jest got the mail out o' the box, an' there was a letter fer this crool-featured buzzard, addressed in care o' my ranch. He grabs the letter an' vamooses. Some words passed between him an' Carrie—jest what, I don't know. When I ast her what name was on the letter, she jest laffs nervous first, an' then acts scairt. 'He done ordered me not to tell,' she says. An' tell she won't! She's plumb scairt of him!"

I remarks that Beauty's features was plenty enough to scare her.

"Beauty?" says ol' Joel. "Yuh call him Beauty?"

"Not in his presence," I admits. "*He* says his name's 'K'."

Joel thinks that's a extryordinary name.

"I bet it's an Elias," says he, climbin' on his hoss. "Well, Adams, I jest thought I'd warn yuh about this plug-ugly's alarmin' actions at my ranch. I got it figgered he's a desprit criminal o' some kind, an' that he'll bear watchin'."

I done some deep thinkin' after Joel Harness left. It begun to look like this here Beauty gent was a borned trouble-maker. I was plumb convinced that "K" wasn't his name, an' that he was tryin' hard to keep his real name hid. I tells myself that I'd figgered him right in the first place. He was some kind of an outlaw, on the dodge, an' mebbe these letters what he was so anxious to keep out of other folkses' hands had somethin' to do with his outlawin'.

But I got a heap of admiration fer a fightin' man. An' a gent what had licked the three best scrappers on my outfit was entitled to my respect. What's more, as long as Beauty proved a good hand, I didn't give a durn what his past an' pedigree had been.

But I decides to play my hand safe, an' send Beauty out with the rest o' my cowboys, 'stead o' keepin' him at odd jobs around the home ranch. Thisaway, we can kinda keep an eye on him. An' if he's got any outlaw tricks up his sleeve, we'll have a chanct to stop his play afore he slips anything over on the ol' 4 P Z.

So next mornin', I says to Beauty:

"'K'," I says, "I'm puttin' yuh on a reg'lar ridin' job, beginnin' this mornin'. The other boys is ridin' over to the S Bar to help start roundin' up that bunch o' fuzz-tails. I'm sendin' you along with them."

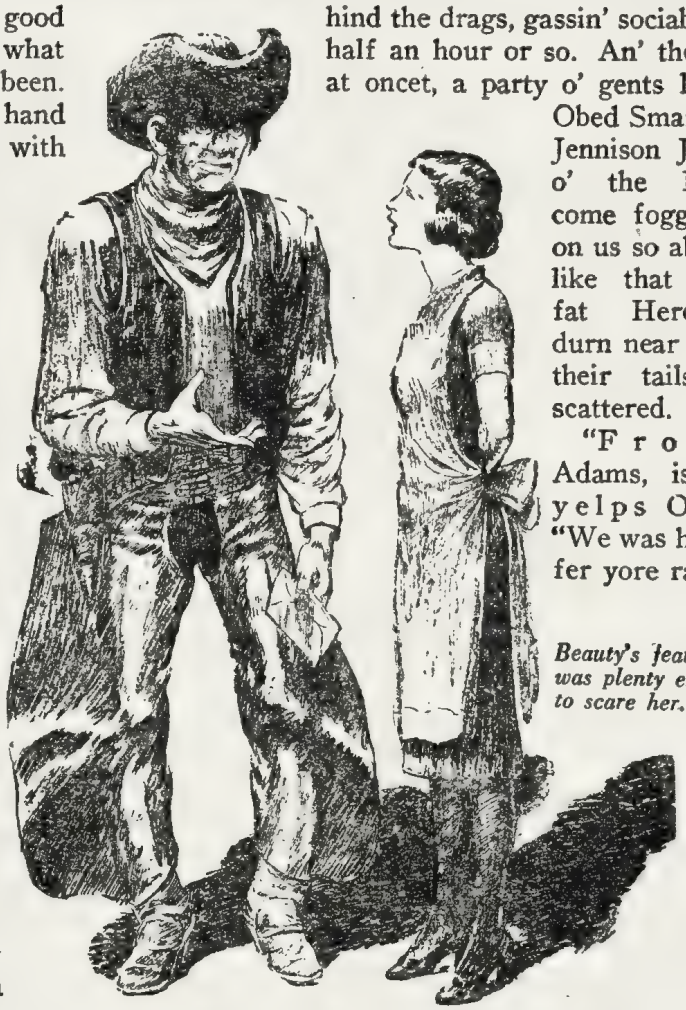
He grunts some langwidge that cows but not humans understands, an' he neglecks to state that he's tickled 'most to death over his promotion. When he rides away towards the S Bar with the other boys, I see him turn in his saddle, cock that little carrot-colored cougar head o' his to one side, worried-like, an' shoot a longin' glance towards the 4 P Z mail-box.

I saddled up 'bout ten o'clock, an' dusted over towards Jennison. Wanted to see the Ladder Ranch range-boss, who was drivin' a herd o' two hundred an' fifty three-year-olds in to town to ship fer the high spring market. Me an' the Ladder boss was holdin' joint water-rights in Big Tail Canyon, an' we'd planned on gettin' some legal papers fixed up in town to-day.

I found him an' three cowboys with the herd about three miles from Grasshopper Crick. The beeves was all Whitefaces—fat from a winter feed of oil cake, an' well-shed fer the time o' year. They was strung out, grazin' along.

Me an' this Ladder boss lazied along behind the drags, gassin' sociable fer half an hour or so. An' then, all at oncet, a party o' gents led by Obed Smart, the Jennison Justice o' the Peace, come foggin' in on us so abrupt-like that them fat Herefords durn near rolled their tails an' scattered.

"F r o s t y Adams, is it?" y e l p s O b e d. "We was headed fer yore ranch."



Beauty's features was plenty enough to scare her.

Obed Smart's a blue-nosed, spider-legged little ol' cuss, noted fer his square dealin's in matters o' law.

"Want to serve some papers on me, Squire?" I asts. "I notice yuh got yore constable along."

"I got a hull posse!" he states. "They's six of us. It takes a big posse to ketch a big desperado! The p'int is, Frosty—'thout any wherebys er whereases er wherefores—hain't yuh got a overgrown, plug-ugly, pink-haired, bullet-headed, hydrophoby-faced cowpuncher ridin' fer yore outfit?"

"Yuh must mean Beauty," I grins.

"If Beauty's his name, he was shore named wrong!" says Obed, who ain't a jokin' man by nature.

"He calls hisself 'K'," I says by way o' tryin' t' help out.

"Ah-ha!" snorts Obed. "An assumed name, o' course! Why else should a man call hisself a letter when he's got a hull alphybet to pick from?"

"What's Beauty done now?" I wants to know.

From what Obed said, Beauty had shore done enough. Seems he hadn't gone over to the S Bar Ranch like I'd ordered him this mornin'. He'd hit fer Jennison, slam-banged into the postoffice, had some het-up langwidge with the postmaster, an' then proceeded to lick the daylights out o' that gent.

"How come?" I asts.

Obed says he don't know exackly. Beauty had ast if there was any mail for him at the office, an' the postmaster he'd said there had been a letter but he'd sent it out to my ranch by the mail-carrier. The fight had started soon afterwards, an' when it'd ended to Beauty's satisfaction, he'd crawled his cayuse an' headed out o' town.

"I ast the postmaster what this plug-ugly's name is," goes on Obed. "But he won't tell. Says it's agin the rules o' the postal service fer him to tell. But I got a suspicion this desperado's threatened his life if he tells!"

"Yuh're plumb sartin Beauty's a desperado?" I asts.

"Beyond any legal proof o' doubt!" declares the blue-nosed little J. P. "Everything p'ints to him bein' a outlaw on the dodge! I've gathered a posse myself an' come lookin' fer him. Yuh know Lon Edwards, Frosty?"

"Heerd o' him," I nods. "He's a stock detective workin' for the Cattle Sanitary Board up north part o' the state."

"That's him," says Obed. "Lon's been down in this country fer three days now on the trail of a hoss-thief. He told me so hisself. Didn't say what the thief's name is, nor what he looks like. But I sorta connects yore cowhand what calls hisself 'K' an' this hoss-thief from up north, what Lon Edwards is trailin', as one an' the same man!"

"Shoot me for a polecat!" I yells, for it strikes me all sudden that mebby Obed's right. I'd kinda figgered Beauty as an outlaw all the time, an' he'd admitted once that he was from the north part o' the state, where this hoss-thief hailed from.

"I'll jest go along an' help corral the gent!" I announces, gatherin' up my reins. "He might take a notion to steal some o' my hosses!"

A couple o' the Ladder cowpunchers feels their blood gettin' restless, an' asts their boss if they can't go along with the posse. The boss says he reckons so, that these Herefords handles easy, an' while there'll be a bridge to cross over Grasshopper Crick a couple o' miles further down, he guesses him an' his other rider can manage things. "Anything to help ketch a low-down hoss-thief!" he says, wavin' us on our way.

There was nine in our posse, an' we shore split the breeze to the ol' 4 P Z. But nary a sign o' that Beauty gent did we find there!

"Over to the S Bar!" I barks, leadin' the way. "Mebby he's gone back there, where I sent him with the boys this mornin'."

We hightails for the S Bar. Every one of us had his six-shooter handy, an' ol' Obed Smart an' his constable carried Winchesters besides.

The mail-carrier from Jennison was jest pullin' away from the S Bar main house as we spurred up. We passed his

flivver like a high wind passes a fence post, an' reined in at a big shed, where the S Bar cook was greasin' up the chuck-wagon. The cook says shore he's seen Beauty ride past not long ago, headed toward the big corral where the other boys was jest ready to bring in the wild-hoss bunch.

"An' yuh say he's a hoss-thief!" shouts the cook, droppin' his can o' axle-grease. "Wait till I git my shootin'-iron! I ain't had a shot at a hoss-thief fer nigh ten year!"

The ten of us fans it down to the big corral, an' then follers the pole-wings that opens out toward the northeast. The Beartooth Mountains r'ared up jest ahead, an' there was a canyon that emptied out o' the mountains into the rollin' country where the hoss-trap was located.

Sudden, Buster Kelly rides out from behind a knoll right close to the east wing. He'd been posted here to crowd the wild bunch in when they was sashayed down from the hills.

"Fer gosh sakes git behind this knoll!" he yells. "The boys have got that wild bunch headed straight fer these wings. If them spooky ponies sees you fellers, we'll lose every head!"

We hides in behind the knoll with him, an' I asts him where's Beauty.

"He left us other boys on our way over here this mornin'," says Buster. "What's that han'some brute gone an' done now?"

"Busted loose in the Jennison postoffice, like he thought he was a fire-cracker an' this was the Fourth o' July!" I tells him.

Buster takes a peek over the knoll, an' waves us to be quiet. We can hear hoofs poundin' close by. The wild-hoss bunch was a-headin' towards the wings, an' a purty sight they was. I ketches a glimpse o' that big sorrel stud. He kept tossin' his head high, an' circled around his band uneasy, like mebby he's got suspicions that all ain't jest accordin' to wild-hoss Hoyle.

"Ain't he a peach?" whispers Buster Kelly to me. "There! He's headin' in! We'll trap the ol' Mormon an' tame him down."

Shore enough, the sorrel was headin' right for the wings with the band. It looks like that o' son-of-a-gun is shore about to be ketched.

Jest then, I happens to spy a feller what's settin' on his hoss atop a little rise, a hunderd yards to my right. He was a-starin' acrost past the corral, towards the dust that the mail-carrier's flivver was makin' in the direction o' my 4 P Z.

It was that Beauty gent!

"Look!" I whispers to Obed Smart, p'intin'.

But afore the word was clean out, Beauty, he touched his mount with his spur an' come thunderin' down off that rise.

Buster Kelly seen him. "The locoed jackass!" he groans, frantic. "He'll kettle every one o' them wild ponies!"

I actually don't believe Beauty even seen that wild-hoss band! His little pig-eyes was all on the mail-carrier's dust, an' he jest took the shortest route that laid between. This route happened to be right acrost the wings o' the hoss trap!

Like a shot, he was past them wings an' headed fer the open country. An' he stampeded them wild hosses 'most to death!

The ol' sorrel stud lets out a snort an' a beller, an' he h'ists his tail. Every member o' the band, from the wobbliest colt up, follers his example.

"Fog in on 'em!" squawks Buster Kelly. "All you fellers! Turn 'em in the wings!"

We spurs up over the knoll. But that wild bunch was plumb spooky now. They scattered eighty-five different ways. We tried to crowd 'em back. They streaked past an' through us. Buster Kelly tried desprit to rope the sorrel stud, but he was too excited. He missed his ketch. My pony stepped in his loop. An' first thing I knowed, I was standin' on my head in the dirt, thankin' my lucky stars that I'd been tossed clean, an' that my hoss hadn't fell on me.

Off a ways, a big white mare sprung up high in the air an' tried to set down in Breakfast Bacon's lap. Breakfast an' his mount goes down in a pile, an' when we pulled him out from under, he was a-

cussin' strong. In fact, ever'body was usin' the langwidge.

"All our work fer nothin'!" rants Buster Kelly. "Every durn pony in the bunch got away. Cuss that hydrophoby-faced Beauty galoot, anyways! He kettled 'em!"

"We'll kettle *him!*" I barks. "Come on, all of yuh! Obed Smart here says Beauty's a hoss-thief that Lon Edwards, the stock-detective's come here a-lookin' fer. Let's git him!"

We hits the trail, an' there was eighteen in our posse now. We et the wind towards the ol' 4 P Z, me pointin' the way. I'd figgered out Beauty's purpose. He'd seen the mail-carrier, and he'd lit out to foller him to the 4 P Z. He was expectin' another one o' them mysteerous letters o' his, an' aimed to git his hands on it afore somebody else seen it. Still tryin' to keep his identity hid!

I had it figgered right, too.

When we sailed over the last rise, an' busted down on the ol' 4 P Z, there by the mail-box stood Beauty. He was readin' a letter. Ketchin' sight of us, he tears the envelope into strips on' shoves the letter inside his shirt. He watches us funny, while we bear down on him.

An' then that cook from the S Bar begins to whoop at the top of his voice an' shoot off his gun, jest to show his style in capturin' hoss-thieves! When that shootin' starts, Beauty jumps into the air, ducks to the bunkhouse, comes out with his gun strapped on, climbs his hoss, an' proceeds to make distance.

"He's tryin' fer a gitaway!" yells Obed Smart in my ear, as we tears after Beauty.

"Who wouldn't?" I snorts. "With this kind of an army bustin' down on him an' that durn fool S Bar cook unloadin' his artillery so keerless!"

Then it comes to me that Beauty's ridin' one o' my hosses—a long-legged coyote that was one o' the best trail-hosses I owned.

"We got to ketch him!" I barks. "If we don't, I'm out a good pony! The durned hoss-thief!"

We put the steel in deep an' frequent, but still Beauty manages to keep about the same distance ahead. He'd lost his hat. That hair o' his was jest the color of an egg-yolk when the sun hit it. Every little bit, he'd turn his little cougar-head an' snarl back at us. An' then them beefy shoulders o' his'd flatten down over his pony's withers, an' he'd shore eat the wind.

Obed Smart kept a-yellin' fer him to halt, but it didn't do no good. So him an' his constable starts to let their Winchesters do their talkin'. That didn't do no good either.

Purty soon we was breakin' briers along Grasshopper Crick. Beauty was still ahead, but his mount was beginnin' to fag. He was lookin' back anxious now, an' wasted a couple o' shots from his six-shooter.

"Come on!" I yelps to the other posse fellers. "Head him off!"

I savvied that he was headin' fer the bridge, north a ways. He didn't want to ford the crick. It'd slow him up an' put us in easy shootin' range.

All at once, Beauty disappears behind some timber. Past that timber, in a little cleared space, we come on him—at bay!

The bridge was right clost by. The Ladder range-boss had his herd o' two hundred an' fifty three-year-olds lined up, ready to make the crossin'. And these Whiteface critters had Beauty plumb blocked.

He'd turned his horse an' set there with his thick lips skinned back over his teeth, ready to face the music. When we busted into that clearin', a-crashin' an' a-yellin', he throwed his six-gun an' began shootin'.

Bang!

"Stop it, yuh durn fool!" howls the Ladder range-boss. "Yuh'll stampede my critters!"

Bang! The leaders o' that herd was jest ready to plank down on the bridge. But now, them shots affected 'em jest the same as if they'd been prodded with spike-poles. They jumped, turned, rolled their tails an' started to run.

They run away from the bridge. The hull durn herd went crazy. She was some excitement! The Ladder boss was yellin' at the top of his voice. Beauty

was a-shootin'. Ten possemen, me amongst 'em, was a-yellin' an' unlimberin' their smoke-wagons. Us fellers didn't give a dang what happened to that herd. We meant to ketch Beauty!

We had a hard time workin' our way through them stampedin' critters. When we got to Beauty, his gun was empty.

Breakfast Bacon make a grab for him. He grizzly-pawed Breakfast under the chin an' knocked him clean out o' both stirrups. Two S Bar riders spurs up fer their medicine, an' gets it prompt an' in quantity — one with a left-hand punch on the jaw, the other with a gun-barrel jolt behind the ear. Beauty then knocks the wind out o' the Ladder foreman, an' caves in Obed Smart's constable's jaw. He grabbed hold of poor Socks Murphy an' throwed him clean over into Grasshopper Crick.

Knocked him clean out of both stirrups.

He was still a-goin' strong. There wasn't hardly a posse member that didn't have a sore jaw, or a black eye, or a bloody nose, or part of his teeth missin'.

"Hands up!" yells Obed Smart, comin' in behind an' jammin' his Colt's in Beauty's ribs. "Surrender, or I'll shoot!"

"Shoot an' be durned!" bellers this fightin' Beauty gent. But Obed batted him over the head with the Colt's instead, an' that ended it.

We handcuffed an' hog-tied him, an' throwed a few hatfuls o' Grasshopper Crick in his face. Jest as he was openin' his little pig-eyes dazed-like, a lean, black-mustached feller come poundin' up on a lathered hoss.

"Sufferin' serpents, Smart!" pants this feller, reinin' over to Obed Smart. "I been chasin' yuh all over the country, ever sence I heerd yuh'd gone to arrest *him!*" An' he points to the Beauty gent. "What charges yuh got against *him* anyways?" he wants to know, sudden.

This here newcomer was Lon Edwards, the stock detective.

Obed Smart, he enumerates all the suspicious actions we've ketched Beauty in. "Ain't he the hoss-thief yuh trailed down from the north, Lon?" he asts.

Lon Edwards don't say anything for a minute. He walks over to Beauty.

"Howdy, ol' - timer," he says. "Tell me. Why'd yuh lick that postmaster?"

"When I ast fer my mail, he laffed," scowls Beauty. "He laffed, yeah, laffed at my name—that's why."

"Uh-huh," nods the stock detective. "An' how come yuh to scare Joel Harness's daughter, like Obed tells about?"

"She laffed too—at my name," comes the answer. "She had a letter o' mine. I told her not to tell anybody what my name was."

"Uh-huh," says Edwards. "What about these mysteerous letters?"

"They was all from my Aunt Cynthy,"

says Beauty, unhappy. "I didn't want these here jiggers to git their paws on' em an' find out what my name is."

"I understand," nods Edwards. "But why'd yuh resist arrest, an' try to steal this man Frosty Adam's hoss?"

"I didn't know they aimed to arrest me," growls Beauty. "They fogged in on me sudden, a-shootin'. It looked like they was tryin' to kill me. So I crawled the cayuse an' tried to run away."

Lon Edwards turns to Obed Smart.

"Yuh've made a mistake, Smart," he says. "I ketched the hoss-thief last night over by Junction. He's in jail over there. This ain't him!"

"Ain't him?" gasps Obed Smart, paralyzed. "Then who in hell *is* he?"

Edwards lays a friendly hand on Beauty's shoulder.

"He's the victim of a name," he states. "He was borned with a name that don't match up with his face an' fightin' instincts. I've knowed him up north, an' I'm acquainted with his hist'ry. Ever sence he was a kid, folks has tormented him about his name. They jest can't keep from snickerin', to think that a gent with features like his should wear sech a peculiar name. Every time somebody snickers, he gits on the prod. Everywhere he goes, some hurrahin' feller tries to get funny, makin' remarks about him bein' so purty, an' tellin' him that a name like his shore ort to make a hit with the girls, an' they bet he's got a lot o' sweethearts on the string.

"No matter where he goes," winds up Edwards, "that name follers him. He's licked cowboys an' cattlemen all over the north part of the state, 'cause they joshed him about his name. He come down here tryin' to make a fresh start. I reckon he thought he'd keep his name a secret, an' live peaceable for a change. That's why he called hisself 'K.'"

"But what *is* his name?" demands Obed Smart.

"His name," says Edwards, "is Kissam!"

All we could do was look at Beauty an' gasp. Kissam!

"Don't yuh laff!" he bellers.

We didn't. We all decided it was a crime for a sissy, ladylike name like "Kissam" to be hitched up legal an' permanent-like with sech marvelous ugliness like Beauty's features possessed.

"There's laws to pertect sech misnamin' crimes like this!" declares Obed Smart, who ain't a jokin' man. "All charges agin this pore feller is hereby dismissed! I'm goin' to take him before the Jedge o' the Districk Court at Junction, an' petition for a change o' name."

That's exackly what Obed done. Two days later, that Beauty gent walked proud out o' the Districk Court rooms at Junction, possessin' a new name what he'd picked out for himself. It was "Smith."

But he could 'a' done better, like Breakfast Bacon pointed out.

"'Smith' don't suit him a-tall," says Breakfast, rubbin' his sore chin. "If he'd jest 'a' took that Kissam name, an' crossed out the S's, an' substituted two L's, that big beefy, carrot-haired, pig-eyed, cougar-headed gent would 'a' got a name that fits him jest like a boot made to order. KILLAM—that's what his name ort to be. Yessir—KILLAM!"

An' all the sore jaws an' swelled noses an' puffed eyes an' cracked ribs on our part o' the range agreed with Breakfast.

STOCK COMMISSION FROM RUSSIA BUYS RAMS AT SALT LAKE

THE presence of the Russian Live Stock Commission at the National Ram sale, Salt Lake City, in 1926, added much interest to the occasion. The commission, consisting of three gentlemen from the Soviet nation, was accompanied by J. W. Pincus of the agricultural department of the Amtorg Trading Company of New York. These four gentlemen sat in the "bleachers" with the rest of the buyers and made purchases during the sale, consisting of eighty-one head of Rambouillet rams, carefully selected in advance of the bidding. These acquisitions were added to a good-sized contingent of purebred stock, acquired in Utah, Wyoming and other parts of the West. King Brothers Company of Laramie contributed a large number of fine Rambouillets to the trans-Atlantic shipment which was gathered and sent abroad in October of the preceding autumn. (*From "Denver Daily Record Stockman."*)

Sorely went down like a log.

THE FLASH RIDER

By Francis W. Hilton

Illustrated by CHARLES L. WRENN

A young cowboy bronc-busts his way to the solution of several things.

SINCE dawn, Bruce Thomas, a freckled, lanky boy of sixteen, held his wallowing pony to the drift line of the Shipwheel outfit. Time and again the bitter cold forced him to dismount and walk. His eyes ached from gazing across the illimitable expanse of snowbound prairie for straying bunches of cattle or half starved critters that had gone down.

But save for an occasional herd, humped in the shelter of the knifeblade ridges of the Little Missouri, the bleak sweep was unbroken and devoid of life. Sullen, ragged edged clouds, resting on the spiny pinnacles, increased the gloom and made the wastes appalling in their desolation.

Reaching the crest of a butte which marked the end of his twelve-mile ride, he swung down and trotted about, waiting for the Cross Anchor cowboy he had met daily since the winter drift line was established.

Time dragged. Anger replaced impatience. "Damn that hombre!" he growled, crouching behind his horse for protection from the steadily rising wind which was whipping the fine snow from the drifts and spiraling it across the flats. "Why don't he come?"

The short February day was drawing to a close when he finally remounted and roweled about. "We can't wait no longer," he mumbled. "If that outfit can't hire men with guts enough to ride their lines, they orter quit tryin' to hold 'em. I'm

headin' fer home an' doin' it pronto."

In spite of his decision to return to camp, a thought that perhaps some accident had befallen the Cross Anchor puncher made him uneasy. The further he traveled against the hissing wind, the more persistent became the fear.

"It ain't nacheral fer that outfit's hombres not to show up," he mused, his apprehension increasing with the screaming blizzard. "Hoss, it's just as close to his camp as it is to our'n. 'Spose we head thataway." To quiet the nagging worry that gripped him, he dragged his pony's rump to the storm and started along the back trail.

Still there was no sign of the cowboy. On top of the butte he pulled up for a moment to let his pony blow. Then, trusting to its instinct, he gave it loose rein and plunged ahead, leaning over in his saddle to watch for the tracks.

He found some suddenly; parallel trails, apparently made by two horses, but they were filling with snow so rapidly he could not be positive. Dismounting and leading his pony, he followed them back to the crest of the pinnacle, where they stopped. The puncher evidently had ridden to the end of his line and doubled back. That would account for two sets of tracks. But there appeared to be four!

"It's queer he'd make four trails, onless he got so all-fired twisted he's jes been ridin' up an down this stretch," Bruce pondered. Yet, with every landmark obliterated by the swirling snow, it was easy to understand how the cowboy could lose his sense of direction.

He stood behind his pony to get his own bearings. A sound like a distant shout drifted in on the wind. He listened, breathless. Deciding his fancy had tricked him, he mounted and roweled back to where he had picked up the trail. But it was so dark now he could scarcely see the tracks which had merged into two sets and appeared to be those of a man walking beside a horse.

Hemmed in by falling night, he was ready to abandon the search when he sighted a shapeless mass ahead. He spurred alongside and dismounted. It was a dead horse almost covered with snow!

A dark splotch under its head caught his eye. "Blood!" he exclaimed. "Shot between the ears. Who in the devil would kill a hoss in a blizzard like this?"

For no reason other than the interest a drift rider has in any fallen animal, he brushed aside the snow, laid his face close to the pony's shoulder and traced its brand. It was a "PX." A strange mark on the Little Missouri.

Unconsciously taking a mental picture of the brute, a slim-bellied, bay gelding with a hammer-shaped head, he circled about in the darkness afoot. He stumbled on to the cowboy presently, curled up beside a drift. Dusting the snow from the still figure, he slipped his hand beneath the heavy coat. The flesh was still warm. The man was alive!

When repeated attempts to rouse the puncher by shaking him failed, Bruce straightened up, at a loss what to do. To his mind came tales he had heard old-timers tell of awakening half frozen men by angering them. He decided to try it.

"Git up, yuh *lobo!*" he shouted, slapping the cowboy's face. "This ain't no place to bed down." He was rewarded with a momentary stare. "Git up, yuh wuthless cuss!"

After several minutes of pommeling, the puncher opened his eyes. "Lemme alone. I'm jes restin'," he mumbled. "I'll kill yuh if yuh don't quit!"

Bruce peered through the darkness at the ponderous bulk of the man and hesitated. Realizing, however, that anger eventually would force him to his feet, he struck him again. "Come on an' fight!" he taunted. "Yo're scairt!"

The puncher's answer was to climb up stiffly and swing at the boy.

Bruce dodged the blow. "Ease down!" he yelled to make himself heard above the screeching wind. "I only hit yuh to git yuh up an' keep yuh from freezin'!"

"Yo're a liar!" the fellow bawled hoarsely. "Yuh can't bust me!" He came on, his great arms whipping the air. Dumfounded that he could not reason with the giant, Bruce kept from reach.

"We're wastin' time," he remonstrated.

"Now yo're up, we'll take my hoss an' pull fer camp. Reckon yuh killed yor'n."

The man shot him a searching glance from eyes that peered out of the gloom with catlike intensity. "There ain't ary man ever lived could bust Bill Sorely an' git away with it!" he roared. "Sayin' yuh was tryin' to git me up's too tame."

Aware that argument was useless, Bruce struggled to keep calm. While he never before had seen Bill Sorely, he knew him to be the foreman of the Cross Anchor, a vicious bully and gunman. Suddenly it occurred to him what had caused the accident. Sorely was so drunk he was weaving on his feet. His periodic sprees were gossip in the cow camps.

He evidently had relieved his own line rider in order to drink unmolested. That he had chosen a blizzard in which to satisfy his craving for liquor was characteristic of the man whose brutality and reckless courage had made him hated by all. His foremanship of the Cross Anchor endured only because of his knowledge of cattle and ability to handle men.

Realizing that he was no match for the bully either in strength or gunplay, Bruce felt easier as his hand closed over the butt of the .45 beneath his coat. "I rode back 'cause I was afeard yore line rider'd gone down in the storm!" he shouted, bracing himself against the furious wind. "Yuh'd froze if I hadn't got yuh riled. Yore hoss is dead. Le's take mine an' git ' shelter."

But it was evident the drunken Sorely did not intend to let the slapping go unavenged. "Shore my horse is dead," he croaked. "Fell an' broke his leg. Hadta kill him. None o' yore bus'ness. Warn't yor'n. I'll l'arn yuh to bust Bill Sorely!"

Warned to instant action by the tone, Bruce dragged his Colt and dropped to his knees just as a finger of flame stabbed the darkness. Gathering himself, before Sorely fired again, he sprang forward and smashed him over the head with his gun. Sorely went down like a log.

"I hadn't orter waste time tryin' to help yuh," panted Bruce. "But I started this thing an' I'm goin' to finish it."

Groping his way through whirling snow to where his pony stood, he led it up. With an effort of which only desperation made him capable, he succeeded in hoisting the unconscious man into the saddle where he tied him loosely to keep from retarding the circulation. Then he pulled off the horse's bridle. It dropped its head and lunged into the storm. Clinging to a saddle string, he plodded alongside.

On and on they went, through what seemed to Bruce an eternity of bitter cold and darkness. The snow slashed his face; the wallowing of the pony threatened to tear his arm from its socket; his legs felt like wooden stumps.

Again and again he was tempted to drag the hulk from the saddle and save himself, but he revolted at the thought. By his own act—forced on him it was true—he had sent Sorely back into oblivion, and the responsibility of bringing him to safety now rested upon him. Rousing himself occasionally to slap Sorely and pump his arms and legs to keep the sluggish blood moving, he tramped on, every faculty, every nerve strained to the utmost, stubborn determination keeping his exhausted body from failing.

The pony's pace quickened. Bruce clung with numb fingers to the slipping saddle string. Then the horse stopped. Through frost-rimmed eyes he saw a light. He tried to shout. From far away came a voice. With a sigh he sank into the snow.

SPRING was late that year on the Little Missouri. When the early June sun finally did break through the bleak clouds, it beat down on swollen streams, mud-choked coulees and flats strewn with carcasses.

For days after the blizzard, Bruce lay unconscious in the Cross Anchor line camp, his feet frozen, his frost-bitten hands and face blanched and peeling.

Bill Sorely had recovered quickly, little the worse for the experience. "Much obliged, kid," he had grunted when Bruce was able to talk. "Reckon there's credit due yuh, though I'd 'a' come through all right. Never seen no storm in forty year I couldn't weather. That warn't nothin' but a little blow nohow."

"Little blow?" snorted easy-going, lean-limbed "Tex" Rankin, segundo, who sat on the floor of the line cabin braiding a quirt. "Yuh never seen a worse blizzard in all yore forty year. It got pore Harve Sellers an' yuh'll never have another line rider who knows this country like him."

"Sellers?" sneered the foreman. "He warn't no 'count. Anybuddy with sense coulda got outa that storm."

"Sellers had just enough sense to skin yuh in that hoss trade las' fall," replied Tex coldly. "An' a whiter hombre never lived. The way yuh got trimmed allus stuck in yore craw, Bill. Ever'buddy knows there warn't no love lost between yuh two. But if I was yuh, I'd put a muzzle on runnin' a daid man down. Harve's got a heap o' friends among the boys."

Sorely squared off, ready as ever for trouble, but when Tex only smiled and resumed his work, he swung on his heel and left the cabin.

"Was the regular line rider lost in the blizzard?" Bruce inquired when they were alone.

"Yes. Found what was left o' him an' his hoss jes' the other day," answered Tex. "We was all scoutin' fer him durin' the storm. Jes got back when yuh drilled in with Bill. Pore Harve never showed up."

WHILE Bruce was still hobbling about on crutches made from brooms, the Shipwheel puncher who had located him the morning after the blizzard rode over.

"Bruce," he said, "the ole man 'lows if yuh ain't back to work this week, yuh ain't got no job."

The boy glanced sadly at his bandaged feet. "Guess I'm through then," he responded grimly, " 'cause I shore ain't fit to work yit."

Sorely entered as the cowboy left.

"Jes got fired from the Shipwheel," announced Bruce.

"What fer?"

" 'Cause I couldn't git back to work in time to suit the ole man."

"Hump!" Sorely seemed to give the thing scarcely a thought.

"I was thinkin' yuh might have somethin' at the Cross Anchor," suggested Bruce.

"No jobs open!" Sorely started to leave.

"But helpin' yuh was what got me fired!" flashed the boy angrily.

"I didn't ask yuh to help me," snapped the foreman. "If yo're fool enough to git yoreself froze up an' fired to help sumbuddy else, that's yore look out."

"Yuh damned skunk!" drawled Tex, stepping inside.

Sorely paled. "Yuh ain't callin' me no damned skunk!" he roared. He reached for his gun but the unperturbed Tex had him covered.

"I'll git narvous some day waitin' fer yuh to git that .45 o' yor'n an' shoot hell out'n yuh, Bill!" he said quietly. "Yo're goin' to find a job fer this kid, or I'm goin' over yore head to the ole man."

Tex's sudden interference increased Sorely's rage. Yet, as segundo at the Cross Anchor, Tex's demand had weight. The threat to carry the matter to John Barton, the owner, made Sorely uneasy. He resorted to diplomacy.

"Reckon I did treat Bruce orn'ry that night," he admitted, "but I was crazy——"

"Crazy?" snorted Bruce. "Yuh was drunk an' tried to plug me. Yuh already had——"

"Finish that an' I'll kill yuh!" barked Sorely, again starting for his gun.

Tex sprang between them, his Colt on his hip. "Yuh was drunk, was yuh?" he grinned. "The ole man'll be glad to know that too, if yuh don't find a place fer the kid. What didja start to say he got the fool notion he was goin' to kill yuh fer, Bruce?"

"Oh, nothin'," answered the boy.

"Yuh better keep yore yawp shut!" snarled Sorely. A sudden thought twisted his mouth in a crooked smile. "I'll give yuh a job. We're needin' a flash rider if yuh got guts enough to tackle it!"

The tone whipped the blood from Bruce's face. In the offer he saw a move by Sorely to placate Tex with no thought he would accept. The Cross Anchor was notorious for its outlaw horses. As a flash rider, whose duty it was to break

them for the strings, he would be compelled to show exceptional skill. Never a rider of more than ordinary ability, still, he hated to give Sorely the satisfaction of hearing him refuse. He could feel Tex's eyes upon him. The indomitable spirit that had driven him through the blizzard gave him his answer.

"I'll take the job," he said quietly. "An' much obliged fer it."

Sorely gasped. "Yo're hired then. Five dollars a head fer broke stuff an' yore found," he snapped. "But the first hoss yuh spoil by lettin' him throw yuh, yuh can pack up an' pull out!" He strode from the cabin.

Tex shot a contemptuous glance after the retreating figure and sheathed his Colt. "Yuh shore ruffled him consid'able, kid," he grinned. "He only offered yuh the job thinkin' yuh'd turn it down. But flash ridin' fer the Cross Anchor ain't no picnic. If yuh wanna back out, I'll make him give yuh sumthin' else."

"I've run my bluff an' I'm goin' through with it," answered Bruce grimly. "I'll handle the job or they'll pack me outa the corral."

"Shake, kid!" was Tex's only comment.

AS a flash rider for the Cross Anchor, Bruce made good in spite of Sorely who went out of his way to heap abuse on the boy's head. Almost daily the foreman reiterated his threat that the first time Bruce was thrown he was through. He endured the outbursts in silence but would have quit many times had it not been for Tex.

"Keep yore shirt on, kid," the segundo told him after one of the foreman's tantrums. "Things is comin' to a showdown roun' here some day an' I'm goin' on the prod. Bill's got somethin' agin yuh that's worryin' him. I never seen a hombre that was ranker pizen to him than you. He's goin' to frame yuh when yuh least expect it."

The suggestion that something beside downright hatred was behind Sorely's abuse, set Bruce to thinking. Aside from the knowledge the foreman had killed his horse during the blizzard, he knew nothing about him. This incident seemed too trivial to arouse the bully's enmity, yet it was that that he had been on the point of disclosing the day at the line camp when Sorely had threatened to kill him. He never had mentioned it, not because he feared the foreman, but because he saw nothing in it to interest anyone.

Dismissing the subject from his mind, he went about his work, each day becoming more confident on the backs of the snorting, bawling broncs which Sorely was careful to see were handled far better than he would have done it himself. But under the tutelage of Tex, the flash rider quickly learned to turn over to the foreman the meanest of the animals, topped and halter broken.

TWO days remained before the fall round up. Looking forward to the time when he could rest while the others were scoring the Little Missouri country for beef, Bruce had done double shift to complete the breaking in of the strings.

That night he eased his aching body between the blankets with a feeling of relief that at last his work was finished. His satisfaction was short lived. Sorely strode into the bunkhouse. "Yuh gotta git a move on yuh," he ordered. "We need five more head."

"Yuh don't need no five head an' yuh know it, Bill," drawled Tex, glancing up from his poker hand, before Bruce could reply. "Them strings is full."

"I said there was five head to bust afore we move," snapped Sorely. "An' the kid'll do it or I'll git sumbuddy else."

The punchers started to their feet, expecting trouble, but the foreman banged the door from the outside.

"There's four head we threw in from the Tower country to-day, but I don't know o' no five, do yuh fellers?" asked Tex. The punchers shook their heads. "We'll see in the mornin'." He dismissed the subject and the game was resumed.

Bruce lay staring at the rafters. Riding five broncs in one day was a task few busters would undertake. Although they were paid top wages, flash riders seldom worked more than three hours a day and

then usually rested alternate days. But he determined to call any bluff the foreman made.

At breakfast, Sorely gulped his coffee sullenly. The punchers, too, ate in silence. Finishing the meal, Bruce arose.

The foreman stopped him. "Yuh got five head to top afore sun-up to-morrow, kid. An' like I've told yuh, yuh ride 'em slick or hit the grit lookin' fer work." Bruce started to speak but Sorely hurriedly left the house.

"Well, I'm damned!" exploded Tex. "That feller shore hates yuh, kid. Yuh know sumthin' yuh ain't never told nobuddy. Bill threatened to kill yuh up at the line camp if yuh squealed. What is it?"

"I can't figger out what he don't want me to tell," answered Bruce truthfully. "Mebbyso he's leary o' leavin' me here fer fear I might wise the boss up he was drunk the night o' the blizzard."

"Mebbyso," conceded Tex dubiously. They stopped at the corral. "Remember, kid," he said soberly, "nobuddy ever done no good fer hisself doin' one thing an' frettin' 'bout another. 'Tend to yore knittin' to-day. There ain't but four hosses I know of, so take her slow. Reckon Bill's tryin' to throw a scare into yuh, but if he really has got some hell in his thinker, I'll take care o' him."

The punchers hurried through their chores and distributed themselves along the top poles of the corral. A bronc-snapper of the caliber Bruce had proved himself to be, riding five horses in one day, was bound to furnish thrills.

Through a seemingly endless morning, Bruce fought the wild-eyed broncs that were run singly into the round corral. When he climbed off of the second, the world was pitching about him; his legs ached and his body felt hammered to a pulp. There was just a hint of collapse in his mind, but he drove his logy muscles to the task, resolved not to give Sorely the satisfaction of seeing him defeated.

He rode the third horse by dint of desperation. He was drunk with fatigue. He got down from the subdued brute thankfully. One more and he could rest for weeks!

"Lemme top this las' un, kid," came the kindly voice of Tex. "Yuh've done more now than any snapper they ever had."

Without waiting to hear the protest that sprang to the boy's lips, the segundo whirled out his rope and caught the sorrel, which he then dragged to the snubbing post. Bruce rolled under the bottom pole of the corral and stretched out his throbbing body. The shouts told him Tex was in the saddle. He raised up to face Sorely.

"Whaddaya doin'?" demanded the foreman.

"I've topped three. Tex's forkin' the las' un," retorted Bruce.

"Las' un?" snorted Sorley. "Yuh missed yore count. Yo're goin' to ride the fifth or go job huntin'! Hafta have it fer the strings."

"Yuh know yo're lyin'!" challenged Bruce, getting to his feet. "But damn yuh, I'll ride it jes to show yuh I can. Then take yore job an' go to hell!"

Leaving the foreman ashen with rage, he re-entered the corral. "Much obliged, Tex," he said to the segundo who was unsaddling the sorrel. "I'll take the other one."

"What other?" asked the puncher in surprise. "There's only four."

"Sorely jes told me there was one more. I'll ride it. Then I'm quittin'!"

"That's the spirit," chuckled Tex. "But where's he goin' to git the other hoss?"

The shouts of two cowboys, who were driving a bay gelding from the barn to the corral, answered his question.

"'Wire Fence'!" burst hoarsely from the lips of the men on the poles.

Tex walked over to Sorely who stood just outside the enclosure. "Whaddaya want the kid to try an' ride that man-killer fer?" he demanded. "Yuh know the ole man give orders never to have him topped."

"Short one hoss," Sorely hedged. "Wire Fence's gotta go."

"So that's yore fifth hoss?" Tex's eyes grew flinty. "A man-killin' devil yuh couldn't hire any feller on the ranch to climb aboard, broke or unbroke! An' yo're puttin' the kid on the hellion when

yuh know he's so tired he can't hardly walk. I'm goin' to Barton an' have him stop it."

"The ole man went to town," gloated Sorely. "I'm boss an' the kid'll ride Wire Fence slick or pack his warbag an' travel!"

"Say, what yuh got agin Bruce, anyway?" drawled Tex.

"Nothin'," answered Sorely hurriedly. "Only he sneaked up on me in the dark an' knocked me out with his gun that night o' the storm."

"He hadta, to keep yuh from pluggin' him. Yuh orter be thankful he took the trouble to bring yuh in at all. But that ain't what's eatin' yuh."

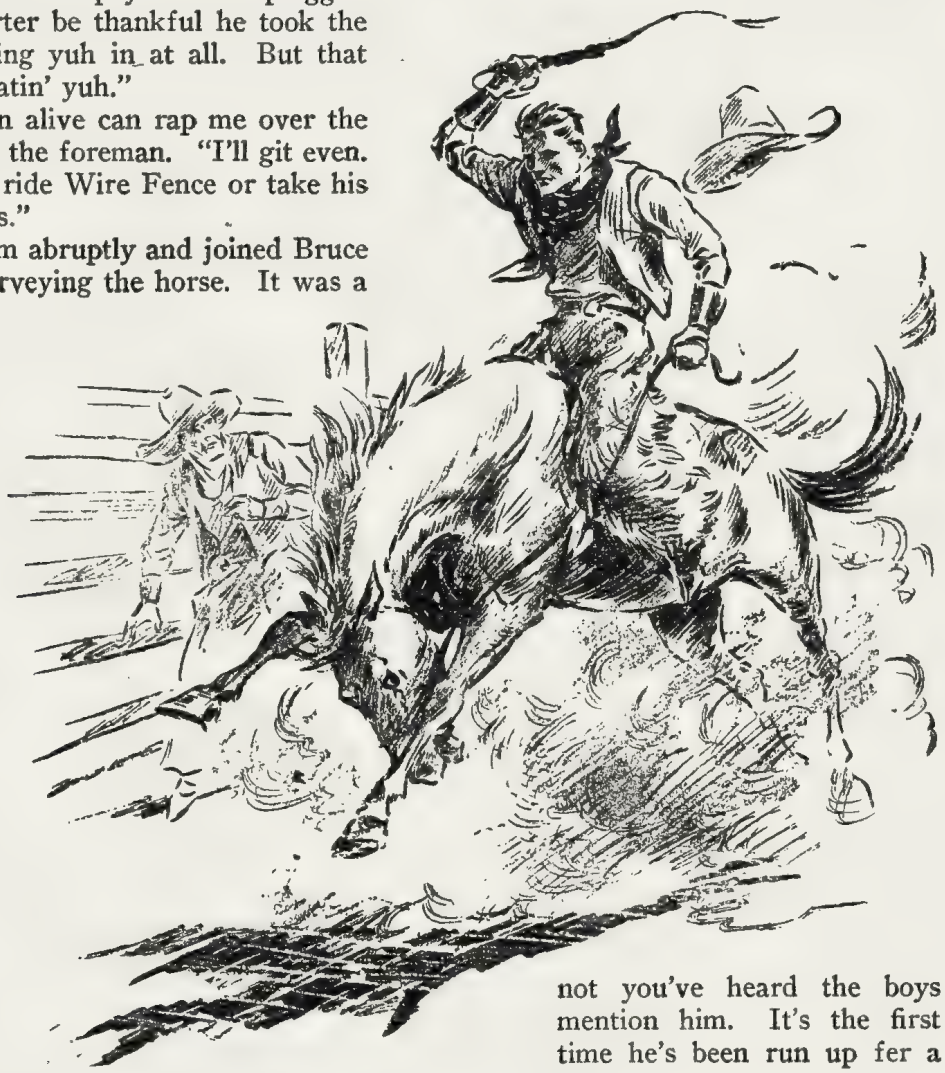
"Ary a man alive can rap me over the head," rasped the foreman. "I'll git even. He's goin' to ride Wire Fence or take his walkin' papers."

Tex left him abruptly and joined Bruce who stood surveying the horse. It was a slim-bodied, big-chested bay gelding. A hammer-shaped head and eyes rolled back to the whites were evidence enough of meanness. Several jagged wire scars on its shoulder showed the source of its name.

For some unaccountable reason, the horse reminded the boy of another he had seen; yet he could not recall where. He puzzled over the familiarity as he took the measure of the brute.

"Reckon he ain't never been rode," he ventured to Tex. "Shore looks familiar but I can't place him. Funny yuh didn't know 'bout him."

"I know him aw right," muttered Tex. "That's Wire Fence. The ole man put his foot down on havin' him aroun'. I didn't think Sorely'd dare spring him. Like as not you've heard the boys mention him. It's the first time he's been run up fer a year. Yo're right. He ain't never been rode. Ain't nobuddy yet as could top him. He's the orn'riest killer in these parts. He's got two men already. If yuh don't feel lucky, don't climb on him."



Wire Fence went into the air again.

Bruce smiled tiredly. "I like 'em slim

bellied. Gives a feller a chancet to git a better knee grip. I . . . ."

He broke off, threw himself to the ground and rolled from the corral, followed by Tex, as the bay, after a leisurely survey of the punchers on the poles, suddenly spied them. With a squeal it charged, snapping viciously, tail straight out like the battle signal of a stampeding steer.

"He's shore hongry," commented Bruce as the gelding wheeled and trotted across the enclosure and they rolled back inside.

"Git a move on yuh!" came the voice of Sorely.

Bruce experienced one of those singular flashes of having been in a similar position before with characters and setting the same. In a hazy way he connected the voice and the horse. Grabbing up his rope, he whirled out a noose. He barely had time to make the lariat ready when the bay came for him, open mouthed, its striking hoofs chipping the hard ground.

Waiting until it was almost upon him, Bruce leaped aside, jerked the noose its length across his shoulder and snapped it about the brute's neck. Quicker than the lunge Wire Fence made on the taut rope was the boy's own move as he tossed a dally around the snubbing post and sprang to safety, the loose end of the lariat across his hip.

The animal hesitated. It had been bested in encounters with that snubbing post before. But blind rage made it unwary. With a squeal, it plunged. Bruce jerked up the slack and jammed its nose against the post. Planting his forefeet, Wire Fence tried to break the rope. The noose only choked him down.

Tex slipped a hackamore over the clicking jaws and covered the white-rimmed eyes with a piece of gunnysack. Bruce picked up his saddle, worked his way to the brute's side and paid out the rope. With the first full breath, the bay struggled to its feet. It sagged in the middle as the saddle was eased onto its back, but blinded, made no attempt to renew hostilities. Catching the dangling latigo, Bruce dragged the cinch to the last notch his strength would permit. He climbed aboard.

A hush settled over the punchers. Twice before they had seen one of their number thrown and trampled to death by the man-killer before they could intervene to give help.

"Now shag him high, wide an' purty, kid!" were Tex's parting words as he stripped off the blind and rolled from the corral. He came to his feet beside Sorely, his hand on his gun.

"I can't git yore game, pardner," he drawled, "but yuh framed the kid to ride this devil knowin' there ain't a man ever rode him. He's killed two hombres. Yuh figger Bruce'll be next. But if the kid gits hurt, yo're goin' on a long trip!" Sorely shot him an uneasy glance and the cold shafts in the puncher's eyes warned him to hold his tongue.

Inside the corral, Bruce was crooning to the outlaw which stood trembling, ears plastered against his head. A moment of portentous calm. Then saddle leather creaked under the strain as Wire Fence came to life, bowed like a hairpin, his head threaded between his front legs, his hind hoofs almost scraping his nose. Down he came with a wrenching twist that brought a groan from both of them. He teetered for a minute to regain his balance, squealed like a pig in a slaughter pen, catapulted into the air and pitched around the corral, lurching against the poles in an effort to scrape the boy's leg from the stirrup.

Bruce's face was bloodless. Never before had he been astride a bucker that so rattled his teeth and kinked his neck when it landed in a stiff-legged, bawling mass. Each time the brute hit the ground, the impact loosened his knee grip and popped his spine. Each time it lunged, he could feel the world glide from under him with sickening speed. Now he was looking down along the writhing neck at the breathless men perched on top the poles. Again he caught glimpses of them from below. The corral was spinning like a top.

Above the thunder of the outlaw's hoofs and the sluicing roar of his own blood in his ears, Bruce heard the voice of Tex: "Shag him high, wide an' purty, yuh

hellamonious bronc-snappin' kid yuh!"

He cut loose. The first time the spurs tore tufts of hair from his rump, Wire Fence hesitated, aghast at the temerity of the rider. Then the sharp rowels were playing a tattoo on his shoulder; the whistling quirt slicing the blood from his neck. Horse and man alike caught the cheer that arose from the onlookers.

"The kid's rakin' him! The kid's rakin' him!"

Like an enraged rattler, Wire Fence bent himself double to bite viciously at his own flank. The rawhide sent his head down between his fore feet. He went down in front, up behind, until his rump was almost touching the rider. Then he straightened out with the speed of a whiplash, sending the lather flying from his foam-splattered body.

Time and again Bruce felt himself slipping. Desperation supplied the supernatural knee clamp necessary to stay on the writhing, twisting back. The pain and abuse he had taken from the other three suddenly crashed upon him. His battered muscles resented further punishment. But in spite of his whirling brain and a cramp drawing up his leg, he fought gamely.

"The kid's goin' to ride yore man-killer!" Tex shot at Sorely.

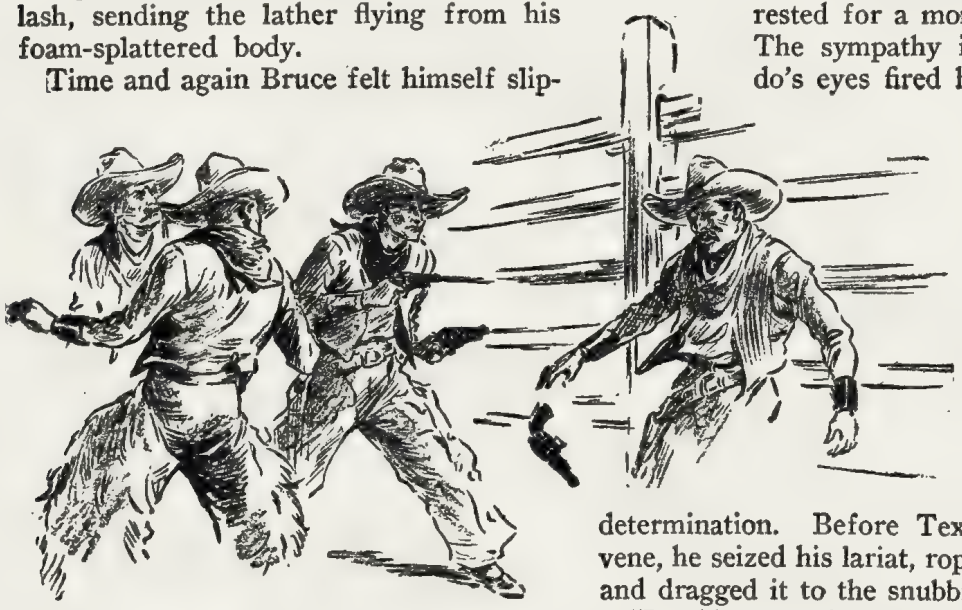
"Don't be too damn shore," sneered the foreman. "He's all in now. But he'd better, or . . . ."

He did not finish. A groan escaped the tense watchers. The horse had gone into the air; sunfished until it was lying on its side, four feet playing tag; swapped ends and come down with a thud that sent the blood spurting from Bruce's nose. A ripping of leather! Saddle, blanket and rider shot the width of the corral over the animal's head!

Tex leaped inside, shouting and waving his arms. Wire Fence took one look at the prostrate boy; then deciding the newcomer offered a better target, went for him, bawling and striking.

"Git yore bedroll, kid!" bellowed Sorely. "I give yuh fair warnin'. Yuh didn't ride him!"

Bruce climbed to his feet in a daze; swiped the dirt from his blood-smeared face. His bewildered glance rested for a moment on Tex. The sympathy in the segundo's eyes fired him with new determination. Before Tex could intervene, he seized his lariat, roped the outlaw and dragged it to the snubbing post.



Sorely pitched to the ground.

"Let him alone!" shouted Tex. "Tired as yuh are he'll kill yuh!"

Blind and deaf with fury, Bruce paid no heed. His one thought was to ride the last breath from the brute. Grasping the hackamore, he vaulted onto the unsaddled, sweaty back; drove home the spurs with a force that knocked a grunt from the weary animal.

Wire Fence went into the air again. But now it was a different rider; a man with a leg grip of steel, who was lacing the blood from his shoulder, slashing him mercilessly with the rowels. He exhausted his tricks but this new demon clung like a cockleburr.

"God A'mighty!" shouted Tex, who again had leaped to safety outside the corral. "There's yore man-killer, Bill. Lookee! That kid's snappin' him bareback!"

Bruce seemingly had lost all sense of reason. Leaning over he had stripped off the hackamore and was beating the animal with it. The unbelievable treatment took the fight out of Wire Fence; filled him with terror of this clinging human. His muscles, too, were giving under the strain. A few half-hearted lunges; then he stopped; turned his head to stare at the spurs gouging his bleeding ribs. Trembling from head to foot, he only grunted under the rowels.

With a final futile effort to budge him, Bruce leaped off and reeled to his head. Expecting the lash, Wire Fence jerked back; glared through blood-shot eyes. A hand was scratching his nose. Instinctively his upper lip curled. Ahead was a human whose abuse had filled his heart with rancor and transformed him from a frolicsome colt to a man-killer. He bundled himself to charge. Instead of fleeing as the others had done, this man continued to stroke his nose. The crooning voice inspired confidence. He liked the feel of the fingers on his bruised jaws. The curl left his lips. He took an unsteady step and nudged the boy with his bleeding ears.

A shout brought Bruce around. "Git outa that corral!" roared Sorely. "Yuh got throwed!"

"Throwed nothin'!" blazed Bruce. "Ain't my fault my cinch broke. Yuh made me ride him fer orn'riness, but I've busted yuh out a top-notch saddler."

"Yuh done it, kid!" grinned Tex, slapping him on the back. "I knowed it was in yuh. Shake!"

Bruce grasped the segundo's hand. The punchers piled down howling their praises. Embarrassed, the boy glanced at the cowed horse which stood with ears pricked up, regarding him inquisitively. For the first time its brand caught his eye.

"Tex," he remarked as they left the corral, "I know now why that hoss struck me familiar. It's branded PX. Sorely rode a PX geldin' that was a dead ringer fer it, didn't he?"

Tex shot him a puzzled look. "Sorely never rode no PX geldin'."

"It was a bay PX geldin' he killed the night o' the blizzard, jes the same. He admitted killin' it. Said it was his'n."

Tex stopped dead in his tracks. "Sorely killed a bay PX geldin' the night o' the blizzard an' said it was his'n?" he repeated blankly. "Hell, his hoss came into camp next mornin'! Is tellin' 'bout him killin' that hoss what he threatened to plug yuh fer?"

"Yes," answered Bruce in surprise. "Why?"

"Sorely, have yuh got that damned man-killer in here ag'in?" The blustering voice of John Barton, who had driven up in a buckboard, cut short Tex's reply.

"Bill not only run him in an' made the kid fork him after he was daid on his feet from toppin' three other bad uns, but said he'd fire him if he didn't," volunteered Tex.

"Did the kid ride him?" asked the old man hoarsely.

"Did he?" ejaculated Tex. "Yuh jes tell a man he rode him to a standstill *bareback!*"

"God A'mighty!" blurted Barton. "Shake, kid." Still gripping the hand Bruce extended awkwardly, the rancher faced Sorely. "Didn't I tell yuh never to put a man on that outlaw?"

"Yes," muttered the foreman.

"An' while I'm away yuh pull this? Sorely, I've stood fer yore cussedness long enough. Gwan up an' git yore bedroll. Tex"—the lanky segundo stepped to his side—"yuh handle the round-up. Startin' to-morrow, yo're foreman o' the Cross Anchor. An' . . . ." He shot a piercing look at Bruce who stood, smeared with blood, his legs trembling with exhaustion. "An' yuh kid," he went on, "yo're too good a man to git stove up on pitchin' hosses. Yuh jes take Tex's place as segundo."

The punchers howled their approval! The rancher started for the house. Bruce grinned into the eyes of Tex. A snarl from Sorely warned him to action. He leaped aside. A bullet whined over his

head. Tex's Colt cracked once. Sorely pitched to the ground.

The shots brought Barton back on the run. "Boss," said Tex, "the kid's got sumthin' on his chest. Tell him 'bout that PX geldin', Bruce."

"I hate to squeal even on Bill." The boy scuffed the ground with the toe of his boot. "But I was tellin' Tex that the night o' the big blizzard, Sorely killed a bay branded PX that was a dead ringer fer Wire Fence."

"How do yuh know?" demanded Barton excitedly.

"Seen the dead hoss. Sorely admitted killin' it when I found him there. Said it was his'n."

"He did?" barked the rancher. "Tex, start one o' the boys to town fer the sheriff. Yuh other hombres drag that skunk to the house and see if yuh can do anythin' fer him. Reckon we'll clear this thing up now. Why didn't yuh say sumthin' afore, Bruce?"

"Killin' a crippled hoss warn't nothin'," answered the boy. "He told me the bay fell an' broke its leg——"

"Didja see anythin' else?" cut in Barton.

"No. But now I think of it, I heard sumbuddy holler. An' I couldn't figger out the tracks. Looked like two hosses had come to the top o' that butte. Then it seemed like one was a hoss an' the other a man afoot——"

"Course yuh couldn't figger it out!" shouted the rancher. "Two hosses an' two men did ride to that butte, but only one man an' a hoss come back. We couldn't git head or tail to it either until jes now. That PX geldin' warn't Sorely's. It was a geldin' he traded Harve Sellers, the line rider. Harve warn't lost in the blizzard. He was murdered out yonder on the butte. If Bill Sorely killed that geldin', he's the back-shootin' hombre as finally got even with Harve fer skinnin' him in a hoss trade!"

HOBBLING A COW HORSE

HORSES wise enough to become cow horses, "top string cayuses," are likewise intelligent enough to learn a lot of other things. One of the early accomplishments of a knowing cow horse is accumulating wisdom in how to "beat" a set of hobbles.

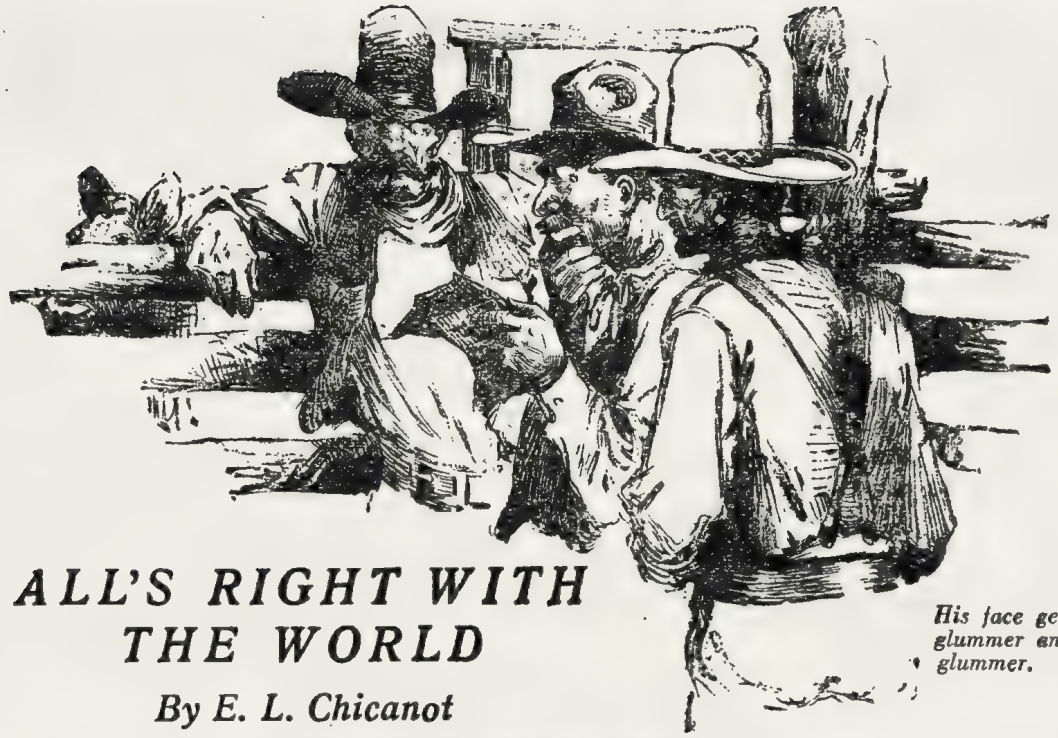
The day's work finished, the horse is turned out to rest, accumulate enough grass to last him over another working day, and to sleep, while the ranny makes his own camp and cooks his own grub. The cowboy's first thought when he turns his animal loose to graze is, "Will I be able to catch him up in the mornin'?" For he knows that the horse is not going to be any more anxious to go to work with sun-up than the average human. So to be sure he can snap his rope onto the bronc when he wants him next morning, he hobbles him, or in other words fetters his feet so that, while the animal can move about with a certain amount of freedom to find grazing, he will be unable to get very far because he can only proceed at a slow walk.

There are several different methods of hobbling, the most common of which is the "double hobble." These are made of a short chain or strap with leather cuffs at each end and fitted so that they can be buckled about the two fore legs or the two hind legs, although the hind leg hobble is rarely used. A good substitute for the regulation chain and leather hobble is a strand of cotton rope which is tied about one fore leg just above or below the pastern, loosely twisted on itself for a distance of eight or ten inches, then tied around the other fore leg.

But some horses become adept in beating the double hobble and stray several miles during the night. Then the "side hobble" is used. This hobble has a longer chain than the double hobble and is attached to the fore and hind legs on the same side of the animal. This hobble is useless on a "pacer stepped" animal because it does not impede his progress at all, since pacers step out with the fore and hind legs in unison.

Horses that learn to beat the double hobble and side hobble are sometimes "cross hobbled;" that is, the "off" rear and "nigh" fore legs are hobbled together. This method is known as "cross lining," but it is dangerous sometimes on a nervous horse who is liable to be thrown into a panic suddenly. As surely as this happens, he will throw himself, fight the hobble and become injured. Picket hobbling, especially by the fore leg, is likewise dangerous for this reason.

In fact, picketing an animal for the night is looked upon in many sections of the West as a very bad practice. "Chaining" is sometimes resorted to, though this is also dangerous. In chaining, a cowboy merely attaches a length of chain, about two feet long, to one of the animal's legs and allows the chain to trail. If the animal starts to run, the chain whips about the other legs, and besides being painful often trips the horse until he is forced to stand still or be thrown.



His face gets glummer and glummer.

ALL'S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD

By E. L. Chicanot

Illustrated by NICK EGGENHOFER

Some cowboys become convinced of the value of peace and quiet, as well as money.

I LEFT the station of Willow Gulch at which I had alighted a few minutes before, and coming to the main street, pulled up in some surprise. Instead of the little cow town presenting that sober and decorous aspect to be expected at that season of the year, there seemed to be some sort of wild celebration under way. Two completely adorned cowboys were careening madly up the sidewalk, emitting shrill yells of delirious joy. From Pete's refreshment emporium came a raucous medley of sound indicative of riotous, unrestrained merriment.

I recognized the two riders as they tore past, driving me into the middle of the roadway. The Bar 4 was celebrating something. I wondered what the occasion was. And just then I observed Tom Bailey, the ranch foreman, coming from the direction of the station also, his face wearing the dazed, vacant expression of the somnambulist. I cut across to join him.

"What's the wherefore of all this, Tom?" I asked.

"Don't interrupt me," he said, forging straight on. "I'm liable to succumb to hysteria, rickets, melancholia, an' a complication of nervous disorders if I don't reach liquid refreshment within thirty seconds."

I was not in the least disposed to alter his course, and we continued together side by side.

"What's the excitement?" I ventured again. "I did hear a cyclone passed through your way."

"No one didn't notice it if it did," he said. "But that might easily have happened. With the time we bin havin' at the Bar 4, a cyclone would have bin mistaken for a mild an' gentle Chinook."

He managed to stagger along to Pete's without any mishap. But not until he had his arm crooked at the proper angle and functioning smoothly did he begin to lose his air of furtiveness and the haunted expression in his eyes.

"I can't believe it's over," he says. "Bill, there wouldn't nothin' happen to stop an express train between here an' Calgary, would there? I mean, if anybody wanted to get off, it would naturally plumb ruin them, wouldn't it?"

I assured him there was not a chance

in a million of the flier being stopped, and that only individuals most persistently bent on self-destruction would contemplate alighting en route. He heaved a profound sigh of relief.

"Lord, but the Bar 4's bin through a terrible time since you were out here last!" He shuddered and imbibed further strength from the glass. I waited for him to resume.

"The Bar 4 has had a good lesson. You couldn't drag any of the outfit off the range with a horsehair lariat to-day or get them to ride any further into civilization than the suburbs of Willow Gulch. You couldn't convince them boys just now that bein' a plumb ordinary cowpuncher ain't the most desirable thing in the world. An' they've certainly paid to learn that.

You know as well as I do, Bill, there's a lot of misconceptions gets around about cowboys. How they love their hard romantic life, how attached they is to the little calves, an' how contented they is with their lot an' wouldn't change for nothin'. They don't allow a cowboy's got human ideas an' ambitions like the rest of folks. There's a plumb erroneous impression that a cowboy's got no regard for money when he sees as many things he could do with it as anybody else. An' when he sees what looks like a chance of corralin' some, he's just as liable to be stampeded as widows or drug store clerks.

What I'm tryin' to explain is what happened last year when we got back from the round-up an' hears about the oil strike in the Turner Valley. It seemed dogarn hard that outsiders should come in an' take money outer the country we'd ranged over for years for slim wages. Punchin' cows lost a whole lot more zest, an' seemed a darned slow way of accumulatin' for old age. Everywhere we was runnin' against outfits lookin' for leases or settin' up derricks. It was all plumb excitin', an' everybody was gettin' so deep in it, it was no wonder we was primed for what happened later.

One evenin' Syd Miller returns to the ranch with a slick lookin' young feller in store clothes he says he has rounded up with the rest of the strays. The maverick explains that his rightful brand is Bert Saunders an' that he was out investigatin' an oil lease when his team beat it on him an' he wandered round until he was plumb lost an' was found by Syd. Of course we took him in an' fed him an' when he's through an' we're sittin' round the bunkhouse, we is anxious to hear what he's got to say about the oil, an' he don't need much primin'.

"You fellers is doomed," he says. "Your callin' is gone an' you're back numbers. Wheat farmin' started it an' oil is goin' to finish it. I hate to think of what a fine bunch of fellers like you is goin' to do when all this country is spoutin' oil. Even the movies is gettin' pretty crowded. I got out in time. I used to be a cattle buyer, but I seen it comin'. The only thing for you fellers to do is to get into oil. I'm certainly thankful I did. I got some of the best oil leases in this territory, an' just as soon as I've got a little more capital, I'm goin' to start drillin'."

Someone asked him where the capital was comin' from.

"There's dozens of the big fellers will be anxious to come in when they know the lands I got," he says. "For the love of Mike keep it dark that I bit in this country till I get it properly cinched."

This made the boys very thoughtful an' they looks at each other. I thinks to myself this feller ought to be darn grateful for bein' picked up an' saved from starvation on the range, an' after a while I asks him kinder hesitatingly if there ain't a chance of some of the outfit gettin' in on the deal. He doesn't say a thing for a long time, but gazes with eyes half closed outer the window so that the boys don't think there's much hope. Then he says:

"Well, you boys have bin mighty decent to me an' bein' right in the country you sorter got a prior claim. I'd sure like to let you in on the deal an' I think p'raps it might be arranged. How much could you put up?"

One of the boys, all excited-like, blurts out that we got a year's back pay comin', an' without stirrin' an eyelash, he said he thought he might get us stock for that an' it would go a little way towards completin' the financin'.

Well, sir; that kinder took our breath away an' we hung back. To think that after workin' all year we wasn't goin' to have a chance to celebrate, an' there wasn't no reason for goin' in to Willow Gulch! We stands lookin' at each other with our tongues hangin' out an' he sees our enthusiasm is damped a little.

"I'm afraid it's too much to ask of you boys," says Saunders. "I was carried away thinkin' of you all out of jobs next spring when you might have got your money back twenty, yes perhaps one hundred times over, after the gusher comes. Oh, well; what do you think are the chances of an election this fall?"

After that he couldn't have shot himself out of the place. When he leaves for town next day, he's got the year's wages of everyone in the outfit an' we've got some funny marked paper an' a consumin' thirst there wa'n't a hope of gettin' satisfied. Somehow the fortunes we was goin' to make didn't cheer us up right immediate, and for weeks the fellers mooned round mournful-like, thinkin' of Pete's place at Willow Gulch all stocked up an' him wonderin' why we didn't come.

But we was in a whole lot deeper than we suspected. That gusher sure took its time about comin' in, an' seemed like we was the only ones that could help it along. As sure as payday come around, that chap Saunders would be at the ranch house, explainin' how beautifully things was goin' but that the oil was just a little further down than they expected an' they wanted to have a little more capital to go down further. Of course, bein' already plumb in up to the neck, so to speak, with everythin' we had sunk, we couldn't let him stop workin'. We antes up our pay an' acquires a thirst that was worth a thousand dollars to anyone with the price. Syd Miller nearly killed Shorty one day when he asks him pathetic-like if he remembers what liquor tastes like.

We thought we had reached the deeps of human misery when the boss returns from the east. Then he gets plumb agonized an' suspicious to know what's made the outfit so sober an' melancholy an' stay-at-home an' he sets out to investigate. Well, finally we tells him frankly the cattle business is all goin' to be shot to pieces, an' not relishin' the prospect of bein' out of jobs, we was plannin' to go into the oil business. We shows him the stock an' tells him about the gusher we had a considerable share in, which might come in any minute.

He laughs. "So that's the addled outfit I got!" he says. "The get-rich-quick fever's reached even here. You lop-eared bunch of locoed financiers! I'll be runnin' cattle in this country when most of these oil stock promoters are in the poorhouse or the penitentiary. I shouldn't have left you boys alone without a nurse. You bin swindled sure."

While we wasn't inclined to believe the boss, he sorter made us a bit uneasy, so we was just as glad when he said he'd go into Lethbridge an' find out. When he got back, he wasn't so much laughin' at us as mad as the devil an' fumin' like the very dickens.

"It's a dogarn swindle," he says, "like I told you. The feller has got some land, but there ain't even a badger hole on it yet. They ain't even tryin' to find oil."

Well sir, that knocked us all pumb cold. For a long time we was too dazed an' dizzy to realize it properly—all our wages for more'n a year gone an' the miserable time we'd had. Then the outfit turned fightin' mad. They couldn't think of any kind of extinction that was excruciatin' enough. The mildest one suggested was that we go into Lethbridge in a bunch, string up Saunders, an' slowly shoot him full of holes. After they bin ragin' a long wh[illegible] an' is all petered out with nothin' done, I talks to them quietly.

"There ain't a thing to be done by exterminatin' him," I says. "He's got our money an' that ain't goin' to bring it back. Just lay low for a while an' let's

try an' figure out if there ain't some way of gettin' our hard-earned wages back."

The boys wasn't very enthusiastic about it, bein' plumb set on some sort of extinction, but after a while I persuaded them there wasn't a thing else to be done an' they promised to leave it to me.

The bunch would sure enough have gone into a nervous decline if we hadn't bin distracted by a worse calamity, though that don't hardly seem possible. Shorty returns from town one day an' hands the boss a letter as we is standin' round the corral lookin' over some young stock that had just been brought in. The same bein' kinder unusual at the Bar 4, the boss handles it much like he would have a consignment of TNT an' solemnly breaks it open. As he reads, his face gets glummer an' glummer an' by the time he's through, he looks like he'd struggled through a particular hard winter.

"Sufferin' wildcats!" he says. "This is sure the unlucky year of the Bar 4. This is from brother Bill an' he is havin' his troubles like I said he would, strayin' off the home range an' gettin' involved in matrimony. Why in Sam Hill should he saddle me with his misery though?"

Guess you never met Bill Hardy. He is the boss's brother. They started out as partners on the ranch, but Bill soon quit an' went railroadin' while the boss went on accumulatin' cattle. A couple er years back we heard Bill had married an Eastern girl.

"What's the trouble?" I says, all curious.

"Seems like his wife's taken literary," he says, "an' by all accounts it's a bad attack. Wrote a paper for the Ladies' Aid that was published in a magazine an' it sorter went to her head. She stampeded immediate into correspondence courses in writin' stories an' scenarios an' gets involved with a maverick group that do nothin' but talk about art an' maybe make love. You remember how all-fired jealous Bill is with no reason at all, an' him bein' on the road between Calgary an' Edmonton it plumb worries him to death. When the dame says she craves a career of her own, he says immediate why don't she go down to the Bar 4 where his brother is, an' learn about the big open spaces all the magazines is talkin' about. She falls for it an' is comin' to stay for a year to get the atmosphere. Holy jumpin' wildcats! What are we goin' to do with a woman on the ranch?" An' the boss looks suddenly very helpess an' I seen his lips form the word "year."

"She's got to be headed off pronto!" I says.

"Headed off!" says the boss. "If I size that dame up right, the whole outfit couldn't turn her if she's decided to come down here. I figure she'll just turn the ranch inside out an' have us all standin' round on our heads."

He went slowly back to the ranch house like a broken man, while the boys stands 'round serious-lookin', realizin' they can't do a thing. As it turns out, the boss considerably underestimates the situation.

I was at the station in Willow Gulch one afternoon loadin' up with supplies for hungry cowpunchers when the train from Calgary comes along, but instead of rushin' right through it pulls up, the same bein' considerable unusual. Then immediate I gets all taken up with somethin' that percolates from one of the coaches, never havin' seen nothin' like it in my experience. First I just sees the upper part an' I'm certain it's a man, though sorter effete-like. Then I looks at the bottom half an' I swears it must be a woman. I observes both together quick-like, an' dogarn if I know what to think.

It's carryin' a hat in its hand that is distinctly feminine sex but its hair is short an' sleek an' parted, an' if it's really female, the skirt is shameful short. I'm just wonderin' if I oughtn't do somethin' about it, the pest laws bein' that strict, when, me bein' the only near-human on the landscape, it ambles up an' stands before me.

"Are you from the Bar 4?" it says.

"Yes ma'am," I says, takin' a wild chance.

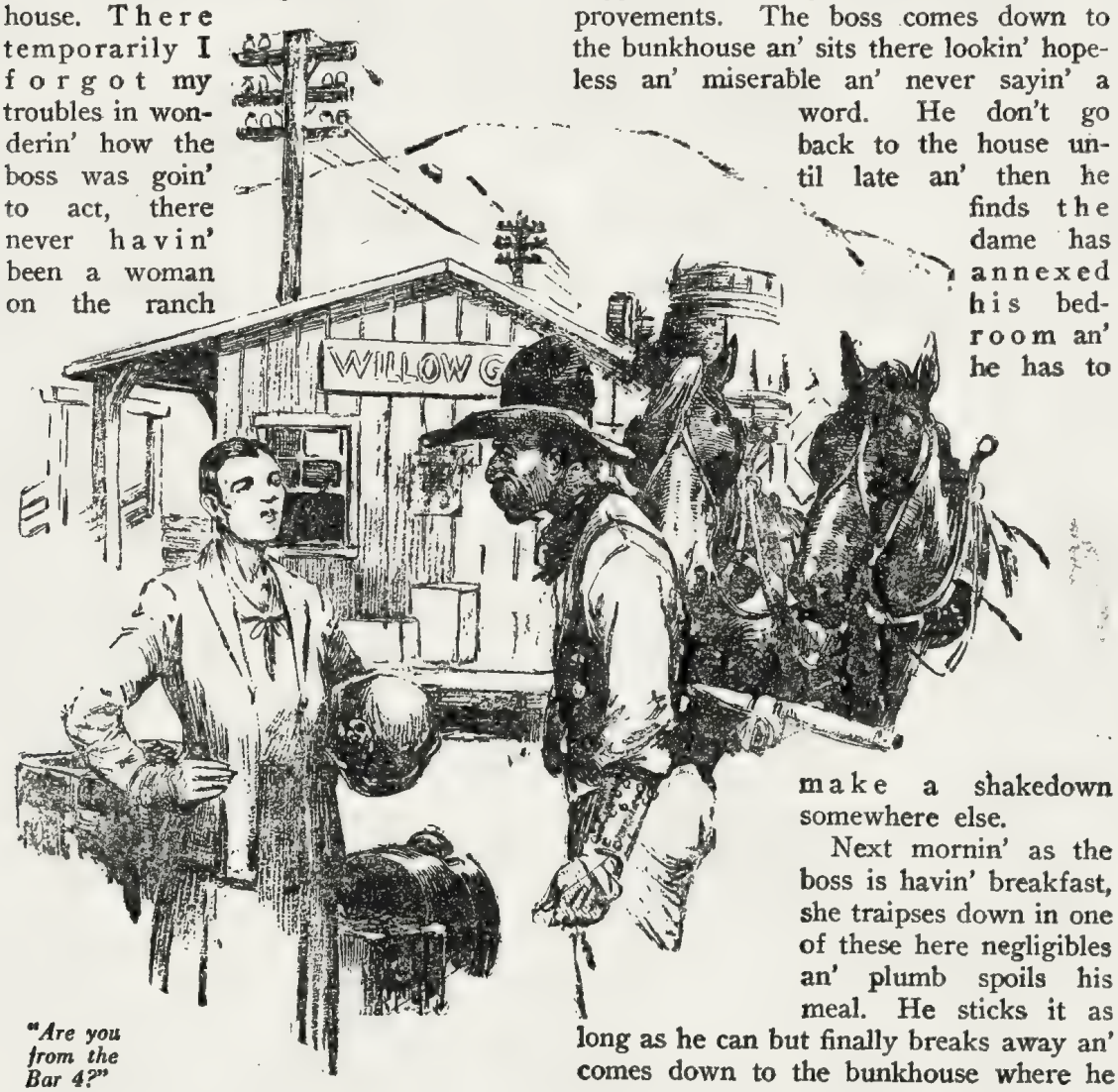
"I'm Mrs. Hardy and I want you to

take me out. Those are my things over there."

It was just like the boss said. She just said them words simple-like an' looked at me, an' if I'd had orders to shoot her on sight I'd er done just like I done an' hustled her baggage an' typewriter an' loaded them into the wagon. Last of all, I helps the dame up an' we starts off.

She is plumb full of conversation an' asks me all sorts of questions. Every reply I make she gives a little squeal an' jots it down in a book she's got an' asks me more. I took some awful chances once in a while just to give her some real information, an' I was gettin' well pumped dry of everythin' I knew by the time we got to the ranch house. There temporarily I forgot my troubles in wonderin' how the boss was goin' to act, there never havin' been a woman on the ranch an' him havin' no use at all for the sex.

When I drives up, he comes outer the ranch house lookin' like he's eaten somethin' disagreeable, an' moves forward cautious, like he's aimin' to bridle an outlaw. She greets him like the long lost relative he is but don't want to be, an' lookin' plumb agonized he drags her inside. Soon after he comes out alone, with all the appearance of a man havin' barely survived a cyclone. He calls for the Chinaman an' gives him instructions to give the lady any room she likes an' any other blame thing she wants, only to keep her away from him. Seems like she had started to comment on the housekeepin' arrangements right away an' made suggestions already for considerable improvements. The boss comes down to the bunkhouse an' sits there lookin' hopeless an' miserable an' never sayin' a word. He don't go back to the house until late an' then he finds the dame has annexed his bedroom an' he has to make a shakedown somewhere else.



"Are you from the Bar 4?"

Next mornin' as the boss is havin' breakfast, she traipses down in one of these here negligibles an' plumb spoils his meal. He sticks it as long as he can but finally breaks away an' comes down to the bunkhouse where he

finds his appetite has totally disappeared. He sits there a long time, lookin' wild-eyed an' desperate.

"A year," he says at last, in a mournful sorter voice. "Twelve whole months. Jumpin' snakes! I'll be plumb bughouse long before that time. She told the Chink to wash his hands an' is goin' to have a white cloth on the table. An' do you know what I am? I'm a unique character. She's goin' to put me in a story."

Just then he seen her comin' down from the house an' right immediate recollects he has to inspect some fences at the other end of the ranch. We never seen him again that day.

Then our trouble starts in. She comes amblin' down towards the bunkhouse in one of these here Eastern ridin' outfits, an' by the casual way of her it's clear she expects to linger along with us for the rest of the day. She looks at us like we was some queer but harmless species of crittur an' every time one of the boys makes a perfectly natural remark, she gives her little squeal an' jots it down. The boys gets so embarrassed that after a while they acts like they is plumb dumb an' don't say a word but yes ma'am an' no ma'am. But we didn't seem to be able to go nowhere without her draggin' along, as if we might do somethin' unusual any minute she could jot down in her little book.

We moves on down to the corrals, an' as soon as she sees the cayuses, she gives the same little squeal an' says she wants a rodeo which she has heard about, just like it would be a pleasant sorter diversion for us. Believe it or not, she just had to look at the boys in that way she had, an' in no time at all they was bringin' up some bad actors an' preparin' to do their stunts. She don't seem to realize at all the boys is riskin' a lot for her amusement. We was just kinder useful in providin' more atmosphere, an' she sits on top of the bars scribblin' like mad. She don't show any concern at all when Syd Miller gets careless an' lets a little roan mare pile him on his ear, an' he nearly forgets himself when she asks him to describe his sensations. Syd has got a pretty bad shaking up.

The days which followed we got more an' more fed up with her. We was just curious specimens, only part human, that she aimed to write a book about. She insisted on bein' took all over the ranch where there was anythin' doin' an' askin' fool questions about it an' writin' it down. She seemed plumb suspicious we might pull off somethin' she mightn't be in at, an' her never havin' bin on a horse before an' requirin' guardians, there wasn't much work got done. When I thought of a whole year of it, I felt like desertin' the boss an' goin' off an' joinin' a sheep outfit.

We didn't see much of the boss them days. He was right assiduous inspectin' fences miles away from the ranch house, but he seemed to be agin' terrible when we did see him. He used to come back to the ranch house to sleep, but he would come down early in the mornin' to eat with us an' sit round miserable an' dejected-lookin' until he went off to inspect more fences.

One mornin' he come down lookin' particular wild-eyed an' desperate.

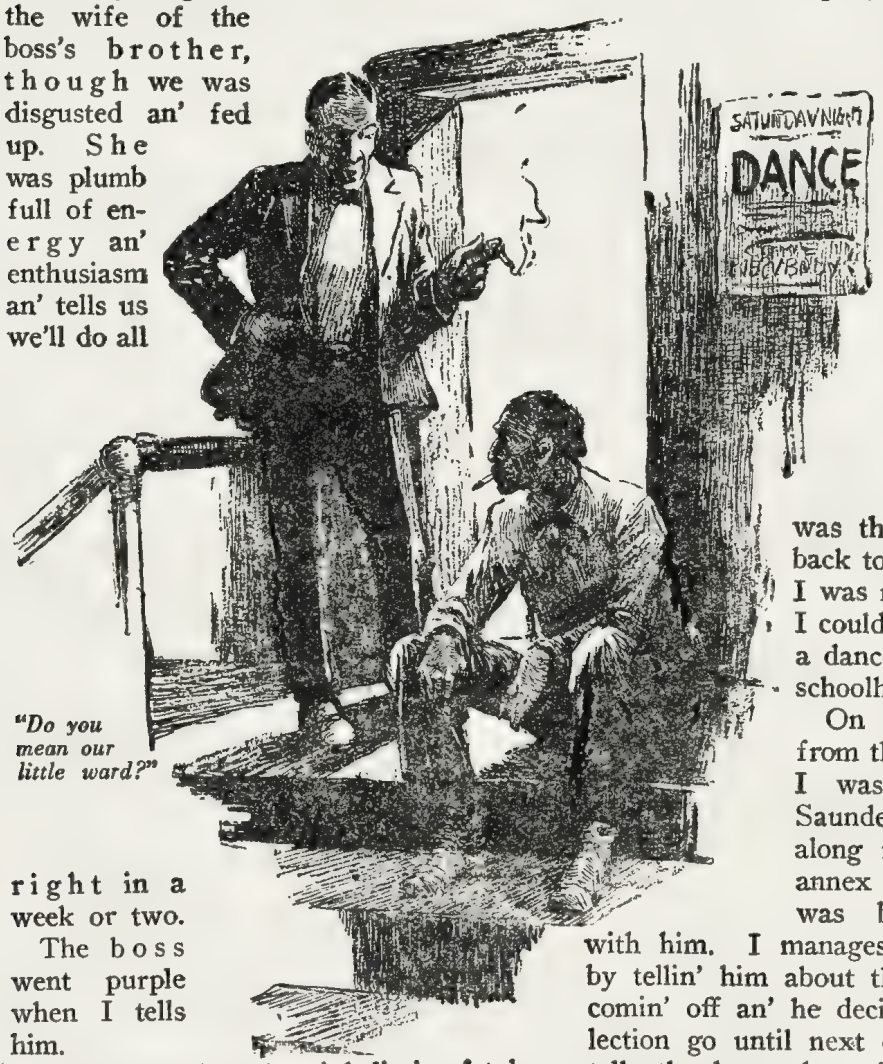
"That woman is gettin' worse," he said. "What do you think now? She's written a movin' picture scenario an' we're all in it. I'm the father of the girl who is stolen by the rustlers, an' she says as she can't do no better, you'll have to be the hero who rescues her, Tom."

"Nothin' doin'," I says. "I've got limits. Why don't you ship her back to the home range?"

"What can I do?" says the boss hopelessly. "She's my brother's wife, impossible as it sounds. There ain't a thing to be done till she's ready to go of her own accord an' we gotter put up with any fool thing she does. I can't stand much more though."

It was just like the boss said. We hadn't a word to say in the matter an' the boss was plumb helpless, not in the least knowin' what to do. She give us our parts an' all that day there was no work done an' we rehearses the scenario. It seemed plumb foolish to me. All the

time we was chasin' like mad over the sagebrush to no apparent purpose, while she issued instructions. I had to rescue her from every dogarn kind of a fix a woman can get into, an' it says a lot for the way I was mesmerized that I done it every time, for I'd er bin tickled to death to have left her permanent in any one of them. She certainly had us properly buffalowed an' we just follered out everything she said because she was the wife of the boss's brother, though we was disgusted an' fed up. She was plumb full of energy an' enthusiasm an' tells us we'll do all right in a week or two.



"Do you mean our little ward?"

The boss went purple when I tells him.

"We've reached the pink limit of toleration even for a sister-in-law!" he says. "If this keeps on, there won't be no ranch. Tom, you gotter think of some way of gettin' that dame off the place or I'll be both locoed an' ruined."

"There ain't no more chance of doing that," I says, "with her involved in this scenario business than there is—dogarn it—than there is of us gettin' back the money we invested in oil."

"Tom," say the boss earnestly and miserably, "you gotter think of something. I can't stand no more."

Well sir, next day they had to hunt another hero, for bright an' early I lights out for town once again to stave off the extinction of the outfit by starvation. While I was loadin' up at Willow Gulch, I seen the flier stop ag'in, and goes down quite apprehensive. But it was only Mrs. Lane, wife of the postmaster at Willow Gulch comin' back from Calgary. Then I thought I recognized who was handin' her down an' I went up closer to see. I was right. It was. An' I went away thinkin'. I was thinkin' all the way back to the ranch, though I was makin' all the time I could because there was a dance that night in the schoolhouse up the creek.

On the trail, not far from the ranch, darned if I wasn't overtaken by Saunders who was comin' along right optimistic to annex our pay, just like was becomin' a habit with him. I manages to head him off by tellin' him about the dance that was comin' off an' he decides to let his collection go until next day. Of course I tells the boys about it right immediate, but warns them not to say or do nothin' about it, havin' a hunch somethin' is goin' to break.

Of course Mrs. Hardy is all set on goin' to the dance, givin' her little squeal when she heard about it. This was another aspect of the native life an' good for at least five pages of notebook. She

rides down there entirely circumvented by the boys.

First thing I seen was Saunders, all decked out fit to kill. Him an' Mrs. Hardy seemed to spot each other immediate as belongin' to the same herd. He gets hold of her right away an' seems to me they dances together most of the evenin'. Leastways they called it dancin', it bein' some newfangled kind that looks like the struggles of a bronc tangled in a lariat. They was thick enough, howsomever, an' I was glad enough to be shot of the responsibility, havin' a pile of thinkin' to do.

I was outside coolin' off on the steps when Saunders comes out moppin' the perspiration offen his face an' joins me.

"Some little woman that," he says. "Don't see her kind in this country very often."

"Do you mean our little ward?" I asks him.

"Is she your ward?" he says surprised. "Widow, eh?"

"Uh-huh," I says, non-committal.

"Say, I'd sure relish the chance of drivin' her back to the ranch to-night," he says.

"Nothin' doin'!" I says promptly. "D'yer think we'd trust her to one man alone? You must er seen the escort she had comin' down. She needs it. Why, d'yer know what that girl's worth? I disremember whether its eight or thirteen millions. Anyhow the responsibility of bein' left so much kinder keeled her over an' she's out here recuperatin'."

"Thirteen millions!" says Saunders, with a sorter gasp.

"Darn my gossipin' tongue!" I says. "It's always gettin' the best of me. For heaven's sake don't let on I told you. What she's plumb afraid of is men wantin' to marry her for her money. She's got romantic notions about love."

"I won't say a word," says Saunders, solemnly. "You're sure she's really got all that money?"

"She simply don't know what to do with it. Why what d'yer think? She found out we got all that oil stock an' insists on buyin' it from us. The boys don't want to sell knowin' its value, but she's real anxious to get a stake in the country an' I guess we'll have to let it go."

Saunders looks plumb agonized.

"For heaven's sake don't do that," he says. "Look here, I'm goin' to reorganize an' I want that stock back. I'm willin' to give you what you paid for it."

"Well now," I says, "I'd sure like to accommodate you but I'm afraid the boys is different. They bin waitin' for that gusher to come in, an' when they is offered double what they paid for the stock, they kinder hesitates."

"Double!" he says, swallerin' hard.

"That was Mrs. Hardy's last offer," I says. "Course, she's liable to go higher."

"Well, look here," he says, his forehead all sweat. "I got to have that stock back. You get it together an' I'll pay you double what you give for it an' bring the money to the ranch to-morrow. But for the love of heaven don't let her know a thing about it, an' put in a good word for me if you get a chance."

Next day, sure enough, Saunders drives up to the ranch, an' inside of a few minutes, I'm in possession of twice the amount of money we divvied up for the stock, an' which he must er done some tall rustlin' to get. I can't hardly believe it's real. Saunders is not lookin' so awful well.

"Do you think I might see Mrs. Hardy now?" he asks right immediate, all solicitous.

"There ain't much chance, I'm afraid," I says. "She's busy packin'."

"Packin'!" says Saunders startled.

"Yep. Somebody's bin careless-like an' let out that she's got all that money. She says she wouldn't have no peace here now an' is goin' to beat it off where her secret is not known."

Saunders has gone quite white. "Mr. Bailey," he says, "I gotter see her. I love her. You know it would be all the same to me if she just had one million dollars. I just gotter see her."

"It's impossible just now. She's in that state where she'd believe the worst of any man. Now I know what I'd do

if I was you. I'll tell you confidential that we're takin' her into Willow Gulch to-morrow an' she's goin' up to Calgary on the flier. What's to prevent you takin' the same train an' meetin' her accidental-like as you're journeyin' on business?"

He grasps my hand beamin'.

"Mr. Bailey, you're a wonder. I'll do that. I've simply got to see her again. You're sure she'll be there?" he asks.

"It won't be my fault if she isn't," I replies, an' he goes off as happy as can be. I percolates up toward the ranch house where Mrs Hardy is sittin' on the verandah writin' in her notebook.

"Hullo," she says. "Wasn't that the Charleston champion just drove off?"

"You might call him that," I says, "but he's a very important business man."

"In oil, isn't he?" she asks.

"He was," I replies, "but he's out. Figures there's more money in the movin' picture game an' aims to get a bunch together an' make western pictures."

She simply leaps straight out of the chair an' goes straight up in the air.

"An' you mean to say you didn't let him know about my scenario?" she shrieks.

"By heck!" I says reproachful-like. "Darned if I thought of it."

"You absolute fool!" she says. "An' now he is gone."

I never seen any critter so mad an' ravin' as that woman. She stamps up an' down the verandah an' calls me all the pet names I ever heard. I let's her go on for a while an' then says sudden, like I got an inspiration:

"Say, he's goin' up to Calgary on the flier in the mornin'. What a chance you'd have to just meet him gettin' on the train, sit down with him an' discuss it between Willow Bend an' Calgary!"

She pulls up dead an' absolutely beams at me. "Oh what a brilliant idea!" she squeals. "I'll go an' pack right away." An' she jumps up an' beats it.

"Well, sir, it worked slick as you like, though I never had a comfortable second. We drove her into Willow Gulch this mornin' an' if I hadn't bin near a state of nervous collapse I'd certainly have enjoyed watchin' the way them two kept avoidin' each other round the station. My knees is plumb knockin' together when the train pulls in an' I sees them make for the same coach, recognize each other with smiles which takes in all the landscape, an' go on board. I follers an' sees them safely seated together in the coach an' then walks back through the train just to make sure I hadn't made no mistake two days ago. I was right. The conductor was Bill Hardy who had bin transferred on to the Lethbridge-Calgary run. Oh boy, I just shudder to think what's happenin' on that train just about now."

He took another drink as riders thundered by the door yelling shrilly and joyously.

"You got to excuse the boys if they're a little wild this mornin'. They got considerable celebratin' to catch up on now, you know."

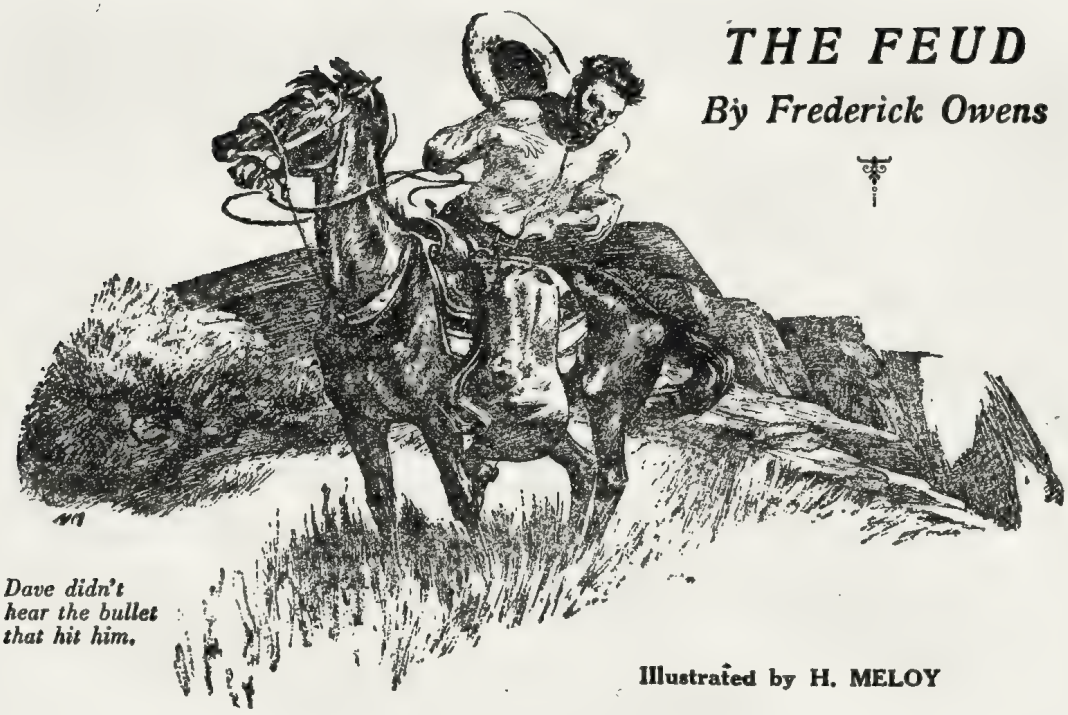
PUEBLO, PROMINENT SOUTHERN COLORADO METROPOLIS, IS NOTED AS AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL CENTER

HOME of the state fair, center of Southern Colorado packing affairs, paradise of the market gardener and sentinel of the vast live stock interests of the Arkansas valley, the city of Pueblo stands as a community well in the reckoning as an important point of agricultural activity in Colorado. Pueblo, in itself, appears more or less commercial in its leanings — certainly, with the Colorado Fuel & Iron plant within its boundary, it is a manufacturing city of real importance. The entire combination, when viewed from the standpoint of the state's production, is pleasing in the progress it cites.

The Colorado State fair has been Pueblo's own as a state institution, and Pueblo is rising to its responsibility of making this exposition a leader in the West. The business men gave proof of their loyalty by causing the fair at its last session to break even, and better, in its receipts. Pueblo's business world will demonstrate to the state legislature the characteristics of that city in an agricultural, live stock and state fair way. (*From "Denver Daily Record Stockman."*)

THE FEUD

By Frederick Owens



Dave didn't hear the bullet that hit him.

Illustrated by H. MELOY

A tremendous battle is the climax.

CURIOUSLY enough, considering the vast gulf of hatred between their families, Dave Jordan was thinking of Sue Turner when it happened. There is little room for doubt that Sue was well worth the thoughts of any unattached young man, and the tall, darkly handsome cattleman was so absorbed in remembrance of their last meeting in the friendly concealment of a cottonwood grove, that he did not know he had ridden over the deadline. In the case of Dave Jordan, at least, the old adage concerning love's optical defect was being most satisfactorily demonstrated.

Dave didn't hear the bullet that hit him. Neither did he hear the faint, far-off report of the rifle that sped it. But he did feel the searing hot pain that stabbed him in the head, a pain that spread with incredible swiftness, numbing his brain and body. He clutched vacantly for the saddle horn, missed, and tumbled like a sack of meal to the ground.

Mercifully, both his feet slipped out of the stirrups, else he might have been dragged to his death. His horse, a high-spirited roan, snorted in fright, glanced once from a safe distance at the motionless figure of his master, and high-tailed it for home. That was no place for a self-respecting horse and he knew it.

How long he lay senseless, Dave never knew. But when he finally managed to struggle back to consciousness, he found his head nearly splitting. He explored it with tender fingers.

"I guess the old skull is still in one piece," he said aloud. "My gosh, but that hurts! Wonder how I got that crease?"

Then he remembered the swift pain, his falling from the saddle.

"Musta been shot. Uh-huh," with growing conviction, "sure as dandruff, one of them danged Turners heaved a slug at me. But what for, I wanta know? I was ridin' along peaceful-like. . . ."

Thought of riding brought up the question of a horse. He staggered to his feet and leaned against a palo verde tree until his knees stopped their shaking and supported him as they were intended to do. He looked carefully about, but no horse could he see.

"Just as I thought," he told himself. "That chucklehead of a horse had to run away. An' me seven miles from the ranch. Well, might as well start out. I ain't gettin' anywhere standin' here. Besides," shamefacedly, "it looks like I'm on the

wrong side of the deadline, an' I'd better be a-goin' before someone else feels a hankerin' to heave lead at me."

For more reasons than one, cowboys are not good walkers, and Dave Jordan was no exception to the rule. Added to that, the deep bullet crease in his head throbbed with increasing pain at every step. He had bound his neckerchief over the wound to halt the flow of blood, but what he had lost while he lay unconscious had already greatly undermined his strength. Half a mile, a mile, dragging feet heavy as lead through the sandy, clinging beds of washes, up rock strewn, treacherous slopes, skirting clumps of sharp-spined ball cactus and occasional hook-barbed, deadly choyas.

The pain grew unbearable. The wound reopened under his labored plodding, and blood trickled from under the neckerchief and ran down his neck in thin, crimson streams. Shimmering heat devils cavorted mockingly about him, seemingly taking joy in his dogged, piteous efforts.

Countless times he stumbled and fell, yet, with grim determination, he got up and forced his unwilling feet onward. At last he stopped, panting heavily, and slumped down at the foot of a lone saguaro which stood on the crest of a knoll, lifting its grotesque arms heavenward as if in dumb entreaty for the exhausted mortal that had come to it.

After a brief rest, Dave pulled himself to his hands and knees preparatory to rising once more. It was his last attempt. Overtaxed muscles rebelled and gave way, throwing him flat on his stomach. The movement caught the eye of an extremely anxious person riding a sorrel mare and diligently following a trail of tell-tale blood spots and scuffling footprints. Just as he sank into blissful unconsciousness, Dave heard a cry, an agonized, piercing call, accompanied by the sharp clop-clop of a galloping horse. Even as darkness overwhelmed him, a smile of content parted his lips.

NO one in the Three Peaks range country seemed to know how the feud between the Turners and the Jordans had started. Perhaps it was merely an upcropping of indiscriminate clan hatreds from the time the two families had warred against each other in the feud stricken mountains of Tennessee. What had impelled them to leave their native state was likewise unknown, unless it was contained in a remark once made by grizzled old Tad Jordan: "Too danged much law. We had to go some place where we could fight in peace!"

And fight they did. Time after time the opposing factions had met on the open range, each blaming the other for some insult that more often than not was purely imaginary. Hard words inevitably led to the blazing of guns and the dull spat of flying lead striking heated, maddened flesh. Then the solemn burials of those who had fallen victims to the feud, the binding of wounds of those who had survived, and the usual plans for retaliation.

A low, broad ridge separated Jordan's ranch, the Rockingchair, and the T-in-a-Box of the Turners; a ridge strewn with boulders which formed natural breastworks for the many pitched battles that had been fought there. Down the very center ran the highway from Springer, the county seat. This had been accepted as a deadline by both factions, and its crossing was always the signal for immediate and bitter warfare.

Fortunately, each faction had a town of its own upon which it could draw for supplies. A single town could never have held both of them. Eleven miles east of the Rockingchair was Ranger, located on a long curve of the H & S Railroad, while eight miles southwest of the T-in-a-Box and connected by stageline with Springer, its shipping point, was Casco Buttes.

Of all Gray County, only Springer was neutral. Seven scattered ranches, partially owned and aided by the T-in-a-Box, were lined up solidly behind the Turners. Five others gave allegiance to the Rockingchair in return for certain water rights controlled by Tad Jordan. There was a deputy sheriff regularly stationed at Ranger and at Casco Buttes, but this was only a formality. Law in Gray County was a farce as concerned the feudists.

THERE was a formidable array of men around Dave Jordan when he once more opened his eyes. He was lying on a bed in the Rockingchair parlor. Lined up along the walls were a dozen men, whose faces were set with grim purpose. Each held or leaned on a powerful Winchester or Sharps rifle, and each wore around his waist a broad, cartridge-studded belt sagging from the weight of a heavy revolver.

Tad Jordan, Dave's father, stood in the middle of the room issuing what appeared to be final instructions for a raid into the Turner stronghold.

"Yuh all know what yo're goin' to do now, don't yuh?" he asked. "We're goin' to wipe 'em out this time, the whole danged tribe—all but the women folks. This is the last time they'll shoot a Jordan down from ambush."

"Why the gatherin'?" he asked.

Dave weakly sat up. The eyes of several of the men flashed to him and Jordan, noticing the wavering attention, turned and strode to him.

"Awake, are yuh? We shore thought yuh was a goner, boy. A quarter inch more an' that bullet would've killed yuh deader'n Samson. Who was it shot yuh, do yuh know?"

"No, dad, I don't. The bullet came from behind. I didn't have a chance to see who fired it. Didn't know nothin' till I woke up later. I tried to walk home—horse ran away—but couldn't make it."

He glanced around the room. "Who brought me here? Didn't—didn't . . . ."

His father nodded grimly. "Sue Turner found you. Said she heard the shot and followed a trail of blood spots. Yore horse came in an' we were just startin' out to look for yuh when she brought yuh in. I dunno how she ever got yuh on her horse, but she did. If she wasn't a Turner, I'd admire that girl a heap. She insisted on stayin'—why I dunno—until she knew you was goin' to live."

Dave smiled. That was like Sue. Stubbornly staying in the stronghold of the enemies of her house, nursing him back to life.

"How long ago did she leave? An hour? Then I musta been lyin' here all day!"

Jordan snorted. "All day! Yuh been layin' there like a log, not movin' a bit, for a week!"

"What? A week?"

"Shore," his father nodded. "A week yesterday."

Dave glanced around at the men who were standing, grim and silent, watching him. He knew them all. There were Eph and John Wheeler, his cousins, tall and lean like himself; the four Hatfield brothers, partners in the ownership of the H Cross; Jake Grant, of the Circle G; Joe Lentz, of the JL, and several others who for one reason or another were under the dominance of his father. These were only the leaders of the clans, he knew. The full force of the combined ranches could not have crowded into a room ten times the size of the Rockingchair parlor.

"Why the gatherin'?" he asked his father in a puzzled tone.

Jordan studied him gravely for a minute.

"We're all set to wipe out the Turners at one fell sweep, as the poets say," he replied. "As long as Sue was here, I didn't want to do nothin'. But now she's gone, we can go ahead with our plans. We've always fought them fair, but when they take to bushwhackin' my own son, it's time to do somethin'. After dark we're goin' to raid the T-in-a-Box an' wipe it off the map. We'll get pretty close before we're discovered, because they won't be expectin' us."

"But, dad," protested Dave, "it was my fault. They had a right to shoot me, accordin' to the rules you an' old man Turner agreed on last summer."

Jordan stared. "Boy, yo're out of yore head! Where Sue Turner said she found you is on our land, an' if you was shot on our land the Turners violated the rules, didn't they?"

"Yes, but I wasn't shot on our land. I —I rode over the deadline, an afterward I walked to where Sue found me."

Jordan's face was stern. "What were yuh doin' over the deadline? I've told yuh—told everyone—never to be the first to violate them rules. We're honorable men, we are."

Dave flushed. It was not very well known that he and Sue Turner were in love with each other. In fact, so far as he knew, no one but themselves were aware of it.

"Well, I—I was just ridin' along thinkin' about—well, just thinkin', an' I didn't know I'd ridden over the deadline till afterward."

"Yeah," jeered Eph Wheeler maliciously, "he's stuck on Sue Turner, that's what he was thinkin' about."

Jordan turned upon his nephew, brows black with sudden rage.

"Eph," he said with forced calmness, "don't lie to me. Have you anythin' to prove yore words?"

"Yuh needn't ask him," his son interrupted. "I'll admit it. I suppose Eph sneaked after me one night when I met her."

The old rancher looked at him in speechless amazement. The defiant ring in Dave's voice was something new, something he had never expected to hear.

"Yuh've got the gall to admit that you, a Jordan, have anythin' but hate for a Turner?" he demanded incredulously.

"Yes, dad, I have." Dave's voice was quiet, perfectly controlled. "This feud is none of my doin'. I think it's danged foolishness. Anyway, I'm not goin' to marry any girl you've picked out. I'll do my own pickin'."

Jordan breathed sharply.

"By God!" he burst out. "Yuh'll do as I say! Don't ever let me catch yuh with that Turner girl! There's plenty of girls on our own side without you makin' eyes at a Turner. So that's why Sue insisted on stayin' to nurse yuh? I thought there was somethin' funny about that. Now you listen to me! Don't you have no more truck with Sue Turner, yuh hear me?"

Dave sighed wearily. He was in no condition to carry on a heated argument. Besides, the wound in his head was beginning to throb again.

"Yes, I hear yuh," he answered.

Jordan smiled in relief. After all, his son was not going to defy him. He was still the chief of his clan.

A cowboy came in hurriedly and said something to him in a low voice.

"Turner!" the old cattleman cried. "What does he want here?"

There was a commotion at the door. Dave, turning his head, saw Tom Turner, Sue's father, his yellowed mustache bristling with anger, pushing his way into the room despite the efforts of three Rockingchair men to hold him back.

"Call off yore dogs, Tad Jordan," he growled, "before I take 'em apart to see what makes 'em tick. I come with a truce flag."

"What the devil do yuh mean forcin' yore way in here, Turner?" demanded Jordan, his own scraggly mustache bristling. The sight of his old enemy never failed to anger him.

"Damn you, Jordan!" Turner sputtered. "What do yuh mean keepin' my daughter here for a week? By God, I won't stand for that!"

Jordan grunted savagely. "Keep yore daughter? Why, you old fool, we couldn't drive her away! She refused to go home until she knew my son Dave would live from the wound one of you scoundrels gave him! She found him, brought him here. I hinted she'd better go home, which she wouldn't, an' bein' plumb gentlemen—which I can't say likewise for you Turners—we just let her be until she got good an' ready to go. Now yuh've got her back, I wants that yuh'll keep her away from my son. She's been gogglin' at him till he's out of his head."

"Dad!" Dave protested weakly.

Jordan ignored him.

"My girl makin' eyes at a Jordan?" Turner was astounded. "Why yuh crazy coot, yuh musta been eatin' locoweed! No Jordan's good enough for my Sue. She wouldn't tell me nothin' 'cept she'd been here an' that she'd found that no 'count son of yores an' couldn't leave him out in the sun wounded. She wouldn't do that to a dog, an' you Jordans ain't no better'n a dog! My girl's all right. You keep yore son from gogglin' at her, though, or some of these days I'll send him home to yuh so full of lead he'll rattle!"

With that he turned on his heel and stalked majestically out of the room. Some of the men, angered by his contemptuous manner, half drew their guns. But he disdained to look back.

THE expedition to wipe out the Turners was indefinitely postponed, now that Tad Jordan knew his son had been in the wrong. By no means, however, had peace come to the Three Peaks range. The feudal hate smoldered quietly, waiting only for the slightest puff to fan it into a blaze. Still, open warfare might have been averted for some time to come had it not been for a mischievous tumble weed.

The tumble weed played its part in the drama two weeks after Dave had recovered from his wound sufficiently to ride again, and again take his place in ranch matters. A gust of wind aided it, sending it swishing against the flanks of a nervous cow grazing on the edge of a herd of six hundred of the Rockingchair's prize Herefords. The cow snorted in fright and plunged into the herd, knocking several others off their feet.

The panic spread like wildfire. One instant the cattle were feeding peacefully, the next their heads were down and they were racing madly up the ridge toward the Turner range. Two surprised herders, unable to mount and get out of the way in time, were knocked down and trampled to death under the sharp hooves.

Across the deadline, down the other side of the ridge and into a bunch of T-in-a-Box steers, plunged the stampeding herd. The terror caught the Turner cattle in a remorseless grip. In another instant the entire aggregation of bellowing, pitching, kicking cattle was headed at express train speed straight for the T-in-a-Box ranch house!

From the Rockingchair someone had seen the stampede and Tad Jordan and ten of his own cowboys rode up on the ridge just as Turner and eight T-in-a-Box riders appeared on their side.

"Damn you!" howled Turner, shaking his fist wrathfully as he sighted Jordan. "Yuh did that apurpose! All my corrals are down, the sheds busted to splinters, an' some of them danged cattle went right through the house! It's a wreck, that's what!"

Jordan laughed uproariously but sobered as Turner began to curse him.

"Shut up, you fool!" he gritted. "Yuh brayin' jackass! We didn't stampede them cattle. Somethin' got 'em a-goin' an' they killed two of my best men. The rest of us was too far away to stop 'em."

But Turner would not reason. He was beside himself with rage. The stubbornness that had kept the feud alive all these years flared forth anew in the breasts of the two old men.

"You lie, Tad Jordan!" Turner burst out. "Yuh did it apurpose! By God, I'll make you pay!"

A gun cracked spitefully. Behind Jordan a cowboy cried out in agony and pitched out of his saddle. His horse pranced affrightedly, then bolted.

That settled it. There was a wild scurry on each side of the ridge as men hurriedly pulled their rifles from saddle boots and flopped down behind the nearest rock.

As a bullet struck it, a horse screamed shrilly, stumbled and fell, and lay still. Other horses broke loose and galloped for home, heads high and tails straight out behind them. A lone rider, hunched low over the horn to present as small a target as possible, sped out of the shelter of the rocks and headed for the Rockingchair. Another horseman, also hunched low in the saddle, dashed toward the T-in-a-Box, helped onward by the uncomfortable whine of a dozen rifle bullets.

Immediately, reinforcements began to arrive. Young men scarcely able to steady the heavy guns, took shelter behind convenient boulders, the eager light of battle in their eyes. Middle-aged cattlemen and hard riding, harder fighting cowboys came panting up. They bore water and food and extra ammunition, and the battle went on incessantly.

Everywhere rifles cracked viciously. The duller thump of six-guns joined in. Grim, hard eyed men squinted through their sights and pulled trigger until their guns were too hot to hold. High-powered bullets glanced whiningly off the rocks, or kicked dust and grit into haggard, pinched faces. Others found their marks in men who called out in pain, or slumped queerly and lay motionless, sightless eyes staring at the blue, cloudless sky.

Several times Tad Jordan had looked around for his son, but had been unable to find him in the constant stream of new arrivals.

"Where's Dave, do yuh suppose?" he asked one of his men for the fourth time.

"I dunno," was the answer. "John Wheeler just told me, though, that Dave rode off early this mornin' toward Springer. Ain't seen him since."

Jordan turned his attention back to the battle. He had no time to worry about his son, a son who by all right should have been fighting by his father's side. He caught sight of Tom Turner peeking around a rock on the other side of the county highway and squinted down his rifle barrel. With the crashing report of the weapon, Turner yelped in pain and grabbed his shoulder.

"Hit the old devil!" Jordan howled joyously, incautiously getting to his knees and waving his rifle above his head.

The opportunity was too good to be missed. Gritting back the pain, Turner steadied his own rifle against the rock and fired. The heavy bullet tore the gun out of Jordan's hand and took the first joint of his middle finger with it.

"Yeah, yuh danged horse-thief!" yelled Turner in high glee. "Take that an' chew on it awhile, damn yuh!"

The Three Peaks range country, wild as it had always been, had never seen such a battle as this. The two factions had clashed many times before, but this time, each seemed determined to outdo its former efforts. The savagery of their hate swelled until they were blinded by it. It was a battle of extermination. Neither side would quit until every man was dead, and everyone sensed it and incorporated it in his own determination.

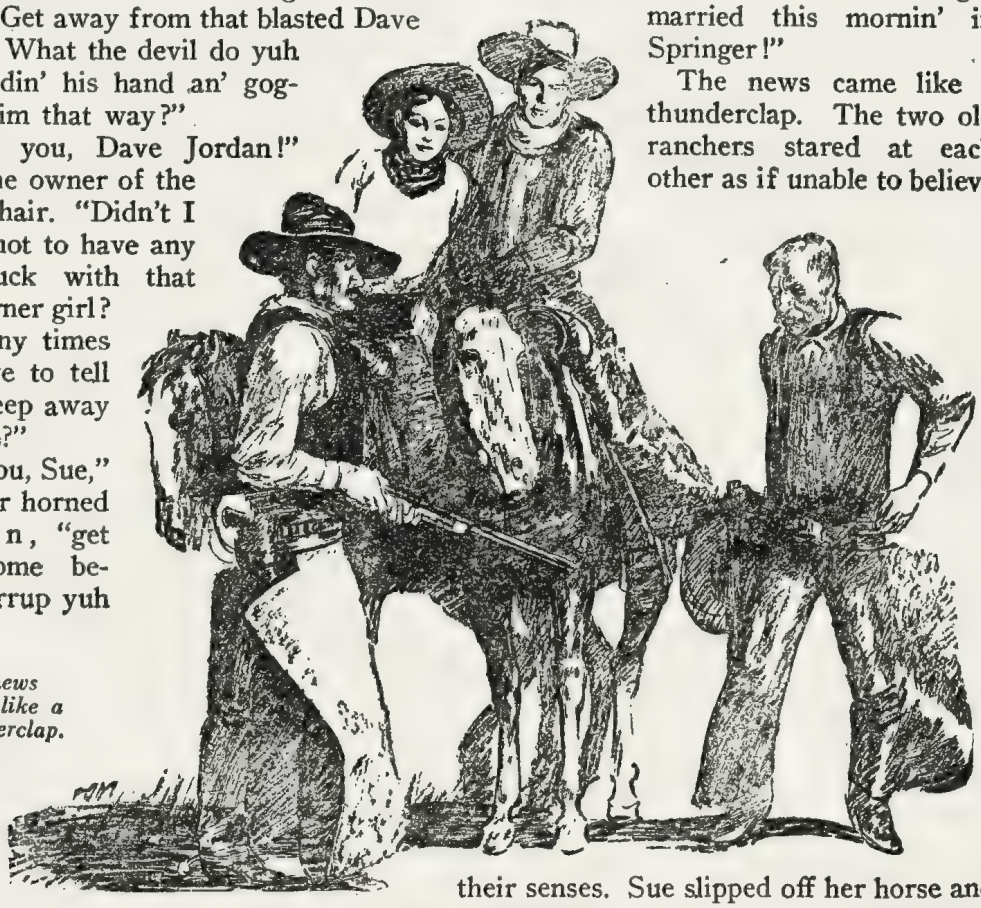
A score of men were dead and nearly all the others had at least two wounds each, somewhere on his body, when late in the afternoon the shooting on the southern end of the line dwindled in its savage intensity and ceased abruptly. Heedless of their danger, the men on both sides of the highway rose and stared in amazement.

Down the road from Springer came two riders, so engrossed in themselves that they seemed not to have heard the fierce note of battle. Hand in hand they rode, their horses sleepily plodding along. They took no notice of the men who gaped in unfeigned astonishment at them, nor did they appear to have any intention of stopping as they reached the center of the line where Tom Turner and Tad Jordan stared unbelievingly.

"Sue Turner!" roared the girl's irate father. "Get away from that blasted Dave Jordan! What the devil do yuh mean holdin' his hand an' goggin' at him that way?"

"Damn you, Dave Jordan!" howled the owner of the Rockingchair. "Didn't I tell yuh not to have any more truck with that there Turner girl? How many times do I have to tell yuh to keep away from her?"

"An' you, Sue," her father horned in again, "get along home before I larrup yuh good! Git, now!"



The news came like a thunderclap.

Sue's pretty, impudent face as she sat her horse quietly, making no move to obey him, drove Turner into a roaring rage.

"By God!" he howled, picking up a stick and starting toward her. "I'll teach yuh to obey me!"

"Just a minute!" said Dave grimly, spurring his horse between the girl and her father. "I guess I've got somethin' to say about you lickin' her. Listen here, Turner, an' you too, dad! This feud's over. If either one of yuh ever do anythin' to start it again, Sue an' I are goin' away an' never come back! Just remember that! The feud's dead an' it's gonna stay that way!"

Turner dropped the stick in surprise. Jordan gasped. It was he who found his voice first.

"What—what do yuh mean, the feud's dead? We ain't signed no truce."

"No," agreed Dave, "but yo're gonna. The feud's dead because Sue an' I got married this mornin' in Springer!"

The news came like a thunderclap. The two old ranchers stared at each other as if unable to believe their senses. Sue slipped off her horse and went swiftly to her father. She buried her face in his breast and sobbed. Turner drew her close with his unwounded arm and glared at Dave.

"Why—why, honey, whatcha cryin' about? If that young Jordan whelp has been mean to yuh——"

"No, no, daddy," she told him hurriedly. "He—he's splendid! It's just because I'm so happy."

"Happy?" Turner glanced foolishly at his old enemy.

"Yes. You won't spoil it, will you?"

"Spoil it? What do yuh mean?"

"Why, by keeping up this terrible feud. Yes, it is terrible, and foolish. Don't deny it! You and Tad Jordan have been just two old fools, fighting because—why, you don't even know what you're fighting about! And if you go on, keep up this farce of a feud, I'll—I'll leave you and never, never come back! I swear it! Now, do you understand?"

"An' that goes for me too, dad," Dave told his father. "You two old roosters can choose right now. Either drop the feud, as we've asked yuh to before, or lose both of us. That's final!"

Jordan breathed deeply and fidgeted with the bloody rag around his broken finger.

"Why, for gosh sake, honey," Turner told his daughter uncertainly, "if yuh want Dave Jordan to make yuh happy, why I guess you can have him! An' if that old coot Tad Jordan says different, I'll lead the whole gang to wipe him out right now!"

The old fire blazed once more in his eyes. Jordan stiffened and started to blurt something that surely would have sent the guns exploding again.

"Dad!" cried Dave warningly.

His father lowered his eyes guiltily and kicked at a stone.

"Well . . . all right," he said reluctantly. "I guess maybe Sue's right. You an' I have been mighty foolish, Tom, I reckon. I don't want to lose the only son I've got. I hate hell out of yuh, but if yo're willin', I'll give up the feud. I—I always did like Sue, anyway, an' I hope her an' Dave'll be happy. Me—I'll do everythin' I can to see that they are."

Sue smiled through her tears at him and pushed her father forward. For a long moment the two old enemies stood glaring angrily. Then, shamefacedly, they held out their hands to each other.

SAMUEL COLT OF CONNECTICUT

IT wasn't a Westerner who invented the six-gun. It was a Connecticut Yankee, Samuel Colt, a young gunsmith. Colt was only twenty-one years old when he conceived the six-gun. That was in 1835. Previous to that, no weapon had ever been invented that would fire more than one shot without reloading. But his conception of the revolving cylinder, or chambers, each of which would carry the powder and ball of a single charge, brought him world fame. During the life of his patent on the "revolver," as it was called, the Colt enjoyed undreamed-of popularity, nor did it cease even after the patents had all expired and scores of similar weapons of a variety of manufactures came onto the market.

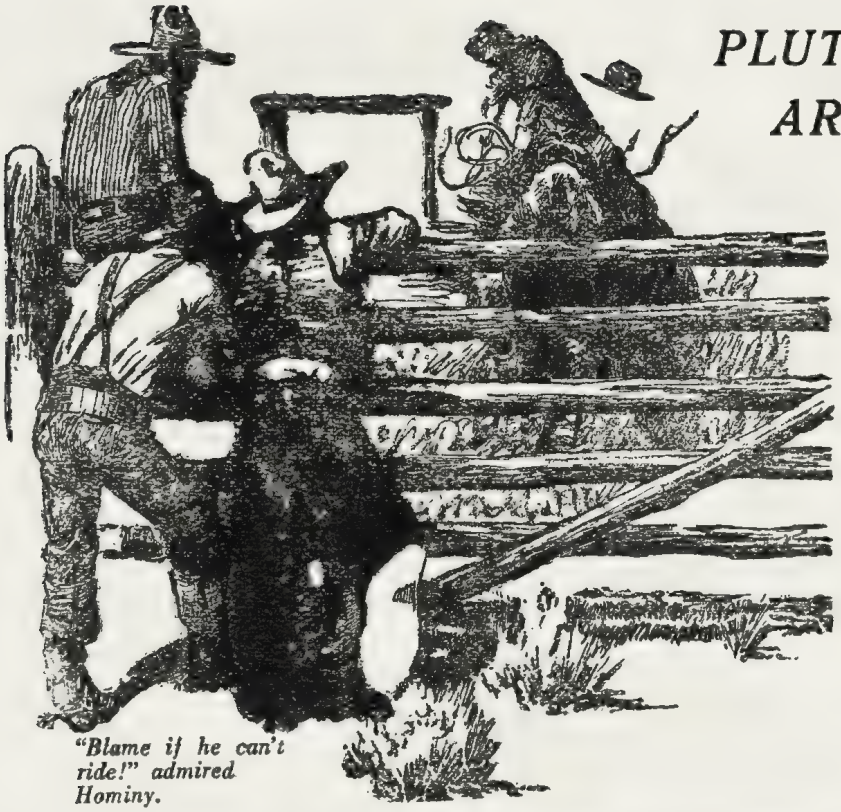
Colt's invention immediately swept the sword and dirk and Bowie knife into the discard as the weapon of personal defense. The Colt six-gun became the weapon of the hour and of the age. No single invention has ever contributed so much to advancement of firearms. It was adopted immediately as a new, ingenious and meritorious weapon.

The original Colt was a cap and ball affair, of course, and it was really only made possible by the invention of the percussion cap by Forsyth, the Scotchman, and Shaw the American, some little time before Colt loomed on the horizon as an inventor of firearms. But with the advent of the metallic cartridge, the Colt revolver immediately adopted that form of ammunition, and with few changes exists to-day as it did then sixty or more years ago.

The most popular Colt models have always been the .44 and .45 calibre, although the .38 enjoyed a degree of popularity along the Western frontier and in the army. As a personal weapon, the Colt lends itself admirably to quick and effective work. It is well balanced, easily handled, can be drawn swiftly and fired from almost any position. It is not meant primarily as a weapon to kill. It is rather a weapon designed to disable an antagonist. For that reason, it is popular in the higher and heavier calibres. The .45 slug, driven with the tremendous foot pound pressure behind it, hits with the force of a sledge hammer. If it strikes a man in the leg or arm, it is almost certain to knock him down, and thus disable him, so that the second shot from the same weapon can settle him if necessary.

One of the drawbacks of the revolver is the fact that a certain amount of force, or foot pound pressure, is lost as a result of the gas that escapes between the revolving chambers and the barrel. This fact led to the later invention of the present-day automatic. But while the automatic has still a greater "wallop" than the old Colt, few cowboys will concede its superiority in any other way. For fast, sure all-'round good shooting, the cowboy will take the Colt six-gun nine times out of ten.

PLUTE AND THE ARGENTINE



"Blame if he can't ride!" admired Hominy.

By Charles Penvir Gordon

Illustrated by NICK EGGENHOFER

It turned out to be punishment enough to suit any crime.

BETWEEN jerks that threatened to snap off his head, "Plute" Denton thought with grim irony that it would be fitting to have a male quartette outside the corral singing "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep." Only his cradle was that throne of creaking leather called in native parlance the "hurricane deck"—when it was cinched tightly on a four-legged ball of somersaulting, sqealing, rocketing dynamite.

Under a pall of boiling dust, on which the sun's sharp rays flashed, the Diamond Y corral inclosed a more spectacular battle than any slugging match of the roped arena. "Stinger," a piebald, demoniac roan, with weird tricks enough to qualify as a rodeo outlaw, was cutting capers that challenged all human skill to cleave to his rocking saddle.

"Ride 'im, Plute! Show him who's the boss!" came a yell from the group outside the fence.

But solemn silence followed the shout, except for the thud and clatter in the corral. The watchers fanned dust that obscured the double forms of man and outlaw, flashing back and forth in prodigious aerial gyrations almost too swift for vision to keep pace with. Of a sudden Stinger's bullet head, ears glued tight against it and eyeballs blazing, thrust through the fog of dust a yard from the tense group of men. Behind a tangle of wind-rippled mane, Plute's strained face appeared for a second, rigid as a mask; then was whirled back into the curtain of dust.

The end was near. A thunder of unshod hoofs on the hard-beaten corral ground, a wild scream from the horse; a roan monster soared through the dust-hazed air, thudded to earth, with a creaking as of muscles, stretched to the final degree, tearing apart. A lesser thud followed, with a human grunt, and Stinger whirled riderless through the dust, which settled slowly toward the ground.

Eli Crosby, the Diamond Y owner, was clutching the corral, his own face tense as he tried to pierce the dusk of flying dirt. A brief ejaculation was flung over his shoulder when the specter of Stinger soared past—"Plute's off!"

Crosby squeezed through the fence.

Other men poured after him into the corral. "Hominy" Keene streaked past the fallen buster, dimly outlined on the ground, and he crouched with his gun in a position to fire if Stinger tried his trick of attacking his rider after he had snapped him off.

When Crosby reached Plute, the latter was slowly feeling for the ground to see which side of him it was on. The dust was clearing and so was his head. While Plute was dazed, it was less from the jar of meeting the hard earth than sheer surprise that he was not broken in half a dozen pieces after his wild tumble.

Plute grinned weakly at Crosby and said, "I must have lit easy—but it don't seem possible on this hard ground." He stood on his feet, to make sure there was not a fracture somewhere that would then crop up. "But I wouldn't get another break that lucky in a year of Christmases. I shore thought it was me for ridin' the clouds in more ways than one!"

Crosby looked up and found Stinger crouched against the opposite fence, his baleful eyes challenging to more battle. The men all watched him closely. His impulses were erratic and often hazardous to anyone within reach.

"We'll leave that cayuse alone for a while," decided the boss. "Didn't know he had a killer's heart in him. Expect I'll get rid of him if I can get a chance. Sam, you all can take off the saddle. . . ."

Crosby halted and his gaze switched to a stranger who had stopped at the corral on a low-slung bay with mottles of creamy yellow on his head and neck. The man hit the eye even harder. He was dressed in "store clothes." The skin of his face was a dark olive, with pits in it like smallpox marks, and a whitish scar was gapped by his lips, which it crossed. Eyes of a glistening ebony flicked from man to man. He nodded to Crosby, and offered his hand to the boss as he came out.

"I am Jean Madoras, of Argentina, South America," he said with a Latin accent. His gaze wandered from Stinger to Plute, who was beating dust out of his overalls while giving attention to the striking newcomer. "I see you got a job all ready for me, there. No horse ever foaled is too tough for Jean Madoras to subdue."

As he took a step, Crosby put out a hand and sharply queried, "Mean you want to try to ride that outlaw? You better stay on this side of the fence, mister. I'm not paying for any broken necks to-day."

Madoras made a hand gesture and grunted, "I take all the risk on myself. You cannot object to that?"

"Let him try Stinger once," Plute spoke up, "if he hankers to get disjointed. Once will satisfy him."

"Well," conceded the boss without enthusiasm, "go ahead. Leave the saddle be, Sam," he called. "Here's another candidate for suicide."

Madoras' bearing was supremely confident as he tossed off his serge coat, stepped into the corral and approached Stinger, held by Sam Haar and Grady Bartee. He paused for half a minute to study the outlaw; then took the saddle. Sam and Grady bolted for the fence. Behind their flying heels Stinger went into abrupt action.

Plute expected his rival to part company with the saddle about three seconds, at most, after Stinger awoke to life. But in that brief space they were shown something else; namely, that Madoras did not boast when he claimed skill with horses. His riding style marked him as one who was hep to the fine points of horse breaking, plus an added finesse that put him in an extra class.

"Blame if he can't ride!" admired Hominy.

"Stinger hasn't got the lightning he had when Plute tackled him," put in Crosby. His eyes were missing nothing in the performance, for he was judging a prospective hand.

Stinger's antics were violent enough for any action-craving buster. At times he seemed to remain suspended above the ground, while he went through the contortions of a toy animal on a string. Madoras was snapped forward and back in a way to unjoint his spine. But he made a clean ride all through and brought Stinger

trotting to the gate, his fire subdued for the time being.

"I'm not hinting for you to resign, Plute," said Crosby, "but I'm going to hire this man. We're short-handed, with fall round-up right on us, and now's the time to grab a good man. You don't need to be jealous, either, Plute," he added in a lower voice. "I give you all credit for taming Stinger."

As Madoras came out, Crosby turned to him and said, "That was a good ride, Madoras. I'd like to put you down on my payroll."

"That is what I stopped here for—a job," said the Argentinian.

Crosby guided the new hand away, calling back for somebody to look after his cayuse, as well as Stinger.

Plute exclaimed in self-disgust, "I'm shore efficient lettin' a stranger ride up and show me how to take the meanness out of a cayuse! And he done it like ridin' a sofa cushion." Plute was looking downcast. "What if Stinger had lost his pep? Made it look bad on me anyway."

Sam slapped his shoulder and said, "He ain't got a thing on you, Plute, so you don't have no call to worry. Just a flash in the pan—that's all his exhibition was. I bet you could outride him any day with a side saddle."

For a few minutes the boys lingered there, to admire and attend to Madora's pretty cayuse and get the saddle off Stinger. Then they went around to get acquainted with the new hand.

They soon found Madoras to possess a facile tongue. Most of his talk was about his exploits with horses, in the States as well as Argentina. According to his boasts, he could easily have copped first money in any rodeo riding contest. However, it appeared that he had never cared to match his skill with a rodeo killer, for some reason.

Plute tried hard not to feel jealous of his rival. With the other boys, he at first listened with interest to Madoras' tales of his homeland, of the great haciendas, and lurking perils in the everyday routine. His close escapes from wild herds and mountain lions—which he said so infested the ranching regions that all stock had to be penned up and guarded at night—furnished material for a lot of his memoirs. Once Hominy asked him to tell about his closest call with death.

"That is not hard to relate," said Madoras promptly. "But you should understand all is different in my country. We," with a careless gesture, "are train' from early childhood to danger, an' it does not mean so much to us—just a part of life, like work."

Madoras glanced about at the circle of faces and plunged into his account.

"At this time, I was only a big boy of seventeen years, but I had been used to the saddle an' herdin' since I was twelve. No man on the ranch could ride better, an' they have lots of good horsemen.

"One day, in the late evenin', while left to guard a herd of very wild cows in a ravine in the highlands, I am startled when my horse gives a snort and if I did not grab the slack reins quick he would have tossed me off. But I hold him to the spot.

"My eyes go swift over the herd—which is standin' with thrown-up heads, and I can see their eyeballs shinin'—to a bunch of green stuff, small guava trees, where I see first somethin' twitch in the leaves, switch, switch," and he waved one hand before him. "Next I behold two balls of green fire as a breeze fans back a guava leaf. I know at once what it is crouchin' there—a huge mountain lion, a cougar you sometimes call him, thirsty for beef blood, the yellow murderer.

"Before I have time to think much, the herd acts by itself, and sudden I find myself facin' a stampede of wild cows, scared crazy by that yellow cat that comes boundin' after them. I and my horse, we are caught in that narrow ravine, which we cannot climb, so there is nothin' to do but wheel and run ahead of the stampede.

"No sooner do we get a start, when I remember where the ravine runs out at this end in a deep bluff, fifty, sixty feet high. But I cannot stop my horse now if I will, for he is in a fright like the cows at the big cat. One of them had clawed him and split his little hip when he was a

colt. The herd, it thunders at our heels to rush us on toward death. In an instant, it seems, the bluff is at my horse's feet, he is plungin' into the air, and I feel us fallin' down, down like a rock.

"In my mind, I begin tryin' to repeat the prayers taught me, an' say I am already dead—it is all over! Then I again remember, when I see it under me, that there is a stream of water runs below the bluff, and I act to save myself while still hangin' to the saddle. I throw myself from the horse an' hit the water with a big splash. The fall does not even bruise me. I am only wet, but my poor horse is not so lucky and his neck is broken."

There was a silence until Sam cleared his throat and remarked, "What went with the stampede? Looks like they'd 'a' piled over the bluff and covered you up, unless you swum away some vigorous."

Madoras had a ready solution. "That is the remarkable part of my adventure. As I say, I land with a great splash and for a minute after I come up I am on my back in the water. I look up, expectin' for cows to rain down on me from the bluff. A stampede does not stop easy, eh? But all I see is a yellow tail that goes switch, switch, on top of the bluff, its tip reachin' over the edge. Another cougar has sprung from the branches of a tree where it has been crouchin', right in front of the herd, which is brought to a stop the same as an automobile with four-wheel brakes."

"Aw, yes," agreed Sam, with exaggerated heartiness.

Abruptly Sam went outside. When out of hearing, a guffaw broke from his control, and he laughed until he had to hug a post to stand up. Lon Powers came out next, a grin splitting his face. In a minute Madoras was left alone in the bunkhouse, while not far away a parody of his glib romance, with Hominy doing the imitation, was furnishing the group of Diamond Y hands with side-aching spasms of glee.

"Let him talk," Plute said soberly. "Mebbe he'll spill somethin' with his tongue he don't want to."

"Huh—what you hintin' at?" demanded Sam.

"Not anything," answered Plute hastily.

Preparations for the beef round-up, which indicated a "bumper crop," occupied Crosby's time too much for him to keep close to the progress of the animosity between Madoras and the older hands. There was not much range work being done, but plenty of gear had to be repaired and there were two or three horses, in addition to Stinger, that needed "topping off" for the round-up. While Plute did the "topping," Madoras seldom failed to be there with oodles of criticism.

"I take back what I said about lettin' him talk," Plute muttered one evening to the bunkhouse crew, while Madoras was outside giving the boss some advice. "If he butts in just one more time, I'll have to cram my fist in his teeth."

"I been itchin'," put in Hominy, "to plant my fist in his mug for a long time. He just ain't bearable."

Matters swiftly drifted toward a rupture. Madoras' insolent demeanor was getting worse. He was highly irritating to work with, and from day to day his bad influence spread. His antagonism to the other hands was open; no longer to be guessed at. Crosby was not blind now to this enmity, but before he could act voluntarily to restore peace in his outfit, the matter was nearly taken out of his hands.

Plute spent much of his time around the barn and horse corral, and this was also a favorite place with Madoras when he was not busy elsewhere. He evinced an acute interest in the Diamond Y horses; had done so from his first day there. They were a nice string, all right. Crosby was justly proud of his saddle animals, and nothing could arouse him quicker than a menace to them.

Going around the barn to get a saddle he had laid out for repairs, Plute came to a halt where he could see two-thirds of the corral. There were seven or eight horses inside, including Madoras' mottled bay, and Plute's own pet horse, a strawberry roan strangely called Lorcha. He was fast attached to the animal, and Madoras was acting in a way that made him remain still and watch.

"What are you fixin' to do?" said Plute under his breath.

It was soon made plain that Madoras had a purpose in being in the corral while no one else, supposedly, was near. He shooed Lorcha into a corner against the end of the barn, then drove his own cayuse after him. Plute stared in unbelieving amazement when the mottled animal, urged by his master, made a lunge at Lorcha with fore feet pawing the air viciously.

Plute sprang at the savage bay that was shaking Lorcha.

For the space of a minute Plute was prevented from moving from his tracks by sheer surprise at what he saw. Lorcha was a peaceful animal; in fact, acting like a staid old bachelor among a bunch of colts, although he had worn a saddle for not quite four years and had plenty of pep on the range. He was caught unprepared by the assault. A hoof cracked on top of his nose with stunning force.

Madoras stood back and watched his horse savagely bite and kick the other unwilling combatant hemmed in the corner. Lorcha rose on his hind legs and tried to fight back, but was battered down every time. He seemed bewildered, like a man who did not want to fight dodging from the blows of an enemy. Suddenly the bay crowded in close; his head shot out and his teeth dug into Lorcha's ruffled neck. Lorcha was thrown back and fouled in the corner, while the bay tried to eat him up.

"Hey, you damn brute, stop that hoss—knock him off or I'll put a bullet through him, and then you!" Plute yelled, as he awoke at last, and tore up the dust reaching the corral. "What in hell you think you're doin' mister man—tryin' to murder my hoss?"

At the sound of Plute's voice, Madoras whirled. Plute plowed to the fence and would have vaulted over it, but checked himself in time, as he saw the movement of Madoras' left hand toward the side where he carried a gun, being a "southpaw." He was quick on the draw, an old hand at the game of shooting it out, and his weapon tilted and roared first.

But one of the corral poles deflected his bullet, while Plute made a dodge to one side and fired accurately between the third and fourth poles. Madoras lurched, his gun slapped in the dust, and he stared at his left hand. A bullet had bored through the thick part of his palm. Blood trickled from his little finger and dropped to the ground, where it rolled in dusty balls.

"Come again with that stunt and I'll aim higher up!" Plute exploded.

He swarmed over the fence and gave Madoras' gun a kick that sent it skidding out of the corral. A disused quirt was hanging by its hand loop on the barn. Plute grabbed it and sprang at the savage bay that was shaking Lorcha as a dog teases a rag. Three times in swift order he brought the quirt down on the mottled head, when Madoras' cayuse let go his hold with a scream and plunged

to the farther side of the corral.

"I ought to plant a bullet in your head, you blame killer!" Plute yelled, and turned to the man behind him, who was in the act of opening a long spring knife.

"Goin' to carve on me a little, eh?" growled Plute. "You shore foller your greaser trainin'!" He caught sight of Crosby and three hands coming at a lope, as Madoras inched toward the fence. "Hold on—don't go yet. This thing ain't settled till one of us gets fired—or both."

Madoras gave him a killing glare and choked, his olive face alive with hate. Then he said, "I'll pay you up for this! Wait till my hand gets well! We'll meet once more——"

"Hey! What's breaking out around here?" Crosby called out. "I want to know who done that shooting——"

"He shot me!" Madoras snarled, holding up the proof of it, his bloody hand. "While I was standin' . . ."

"Tell the rest of it!" snapped Plute. "Tell him what happened first—that you was tryin' to make that damn cayuse of yours murder Lorcha. When I stepped in to make him quit, you dug out a gun and sent a bullet my way. All that kept it from goin' home was the fence between us. Then I shot you, to knock the gun outa your hand before you got a better show at me."

Plute turned to Crosby, whose face was grave and set, and exclaimed, "Look at Lorcha's neck—pick that bullet outa the fence—look at the greaser's gun, if you don't believe me!"

Sam was already examining the teeth marks on Lorcha, although the horse was hard to approach after his recent mauling. Crosby, the arbiter, did not wait to look at the proofs Plute offered, but made up his words instantly.

"Somebody's got to travel, that's certain," came his verdict. "We can't have two men in this outfit with a hankering to let daylight through each other. What do you have to say on your side, Madoras?"

"Nothin'!" barked the Argentinian.

Plute jammed his gun into the holster and exclaimed, "I'll go! You don't have to fire me——"

"Not so rapid!" said Crosby. Brusquely he turned to the Argentinian. "Madoras, I'll pay you off right now. Sam, have his hoss ready for him. The quickest he can get off this outfit will be too slow."

Madoras' pin-point eyes blazed at Plute as he whipped a handkerchief around his bleeding hand and sullenly followed Crosby to get his pay. Plute was not blind to what that glance meant—feud between them until Madoras had got satisfaction.

The tension eased after the mottled bay vanished with Madoras; but not for Plute. The other hands expressed relief that Madoras was gone, and hoped never to see him again, or his like. Plute had nothing to say, except to give a fuller account of the shooting. He had a feeling that Madoras was not gone from the Diamond Y for good—not yet. And that made the safety of his own immediate future a gamble.

Nothing more of significance transpired for forty-eight hours. Plute was vigilant when alone, and these days he was seeing that his gun did not get rusty in its mechanism, or that his supply of shells ran out while he was away from the home ranch.

"You know, Plute," Sam confided one day, "I kinda looked for Madoras to be back here before this. He's a Latin and they're famous for holdin' grudges. I been expectin' a bullet to jump out and hit you in the back any time. But I reckon he's sold out for good, and you needn't lose any sleep."

When Plute came to the corral next morning, Sam met him with the query, "Say, didn't you leave Lorcha here? I thought you was keepin' him up to keep him from catchin' an infection in them bites he got from the bay. Well, he ain't here now."

Both of them made a thorough search around the barn and corral without finding a sign of Lorcha. When they found that another horse was also out of pocket, a brood mare called Midnight, Crosby was called.

"Maybe they've only strayed," he suggested, but with a frown.

"Not Lorcha," denied Plute promptly. "Nobody couldn't toll him away from here without a halter on him. And do you reckon Midnight would be liable to stray off and leave her new colt? I bet they've strayed, sure enough—with a low-down hoss-thief!"

Crosby was startled by the picture these words put in his mind; then anger showed in his grim face and glinting eyes. The hands couched their indignation in profane terms. Of all things that could happen to a ranch, there was no worse calamity than having its saddle stock stolen. All were unanimous in favor of tying the thief to a limb by his neck. But first he had to be caught.

"This makes me mad clear down to my toes, and I hate to lose the hosses," muttered Crosby. "But we can't take time off for any long search, with round-up time right here. Not much chance of finding the thief anyway. Both of the horses were unbranded, and the thief could stick a mark on them and it'd be hard to prove ownership then. Looks like it's a bitter pill we'll have to take."

A man was on guard at the corral all through the following night. Nothing was disturbed. But on the second night, three more horses vanished, one that wore the Diamond Y brand.

"That makes it look like the work of a gang of rustlers," said Crosby. Rage smoldered in his eyes. "It means delay with the round-up, but we can't start anywhere till we clear this thieving business up. I'll see about getting a posse for a real hunt to get those horses back."

Along in the middle of the day, Plute was riding along a little creek that was edged with bushes, when another horse popped out in front of his mount's nose, with startling abruptness. The rider had a hard face under a low hat brim. Without a single word he came alongside, passed a piece of paper to Plute's hand, and plunged back into the bushes.

"A mystery gent!" said Plute under his breath, as he unfolded the paper and read:

"Meet me at Stampede Gulch at sundown, and come alone, if you are not a coward. J. M."

Plute looked again for the mysterious rider, and failing to sight him, turned his mount into the shortest route back to the home ranch. He had a hunch he ought to tell Crosby about the summons to Stampede Gulch. It might have some connection with the horse rustling. But between the time he arrived at the bunkhouse and, after busying himself there a while, rode away an hour ahead of sundown time, he said not a word to anybody about the message or his twilight errand.

Alert for any moving form, Plute rode down through a rocky V-shaped defile and was in sight of Stampede Gulch. It was several miles distant from the Diamond Y, and frowned upon by scabby hills, sprinkled with gnarled trees like hairs on a partially bald head. As Plute hesitated at the mouth of the gulch, looking in vain for "J.M.," suddenly Madoras detached himself from a ridge of rock running slantwise along the left rim of Stampede Gulch.

"I am glad you come on time," he snapped, advancing, "for I am in a hurry to finish up with this damn country—an' you!"

Plate kept the man under indirect surveillance, as he dismounted and cast quick glances about him.

"I'm ready for you," he said simply. "But paste this under your hat, Madoras. I didn't start this feud, and I'm only here to oblige you and get out of bein' called a coward."

"Mebbe you—you gringos can let an insult pass, but not my people!" Madoras growled. "It is a disgrace for any man of my race to let an enemy stain his honor and live. All insults must be wiped out—in blood! You have brought blood from me!" holding out his bullet-scarred, unhealed left hand. "Only blood from your body can pay for that!"

Plute stiffened at the other's violence. He had never hoped for making a truce. But neither had he expected that one of them would not leave Stampede Gulch alive, as Madoras' words and manner

prophesied. That translated the matter into a killing. No wonder Plute's spine turned cold.

"The gringo makes a religion of usin' guns!" Madoras went on. "With them, you do not have to face an enemy—you can shoot him behind. You have take' one shot at me. Now I will have my turn—but not with a gun. I will show you how we fight in my land—and it is no sham fight. It takes men who have the blood of courage to stand it! Choose which you like of these!"

He stepped closer and flung down two black coils he carried in his hand. Plute saw that they were long whips, like those used by mule skinners on a "string team." They were as thick at the butt end as a rattler's fat body, and as sinister in appearance. Madoras' eyes were slits in his dark face, on which the lip scar sprang out luridly.

Plute met his baleful gaze and snapped, "Say, what you fixin' up to stage—where's the trick in it?"

"We call it the 'Argentine' in my country, an' there is no trick in it, but to peel the hide from an enemy you hate!" Madoras flung back. "I challenge you to fight the 'Argentine,' gringo! If you refuse, you have a yellow streak through you——"

"That's enough! I know you got a trick hid to spring on me—you'll probably have some good sport cuttin' me up with that rawhide, bein' a expert hand at it, I guess. But I'll fight your damn 'Argentine' way!" yelled Plute, stooping for one of the whips. "Say when!"

Madoras grabbed up the other whip, darted back a few steps and crouched.

"It is usual to draw a ring for the fighters. The first one to step outside is defeated," he bit off. "But we do not need a ring here——"

"Hell no!" snapped Plute. "You wouldn't pay no 'tention to rules, anyhow, you hoss-thievin' greaser! Come on—le's get it done with quick!"

The epithet "horse-thief" made Madoras' lips jerk farther back from his gleaming teeth. Then suddenly, with no warning more than a swift movement of his left arm, he sent his whip swishing through the air. It cracked with the report of a pistol on Plute's right shoulder, leaving a burn like the touch of a red-hot wire, even through two shirts.

Plute gritted his teeth and took an awkward swipe at Madoras, but the lash missed him as he side-stepped adroitly. He rushed in savagely. His rawhide scored a brand on Plute's bare neck, nearly wrenching out a yelp of pain. In Madoras' left hand the whip moved faster than the eye and cut true at every slash, showing that Madoras possessed skill at the "Argentine" game.

Plute staggered as the lash lacerated the skin under his left eye, blinding him for a minute. He threw up his left arm to keep the whip from cutting the eyeballs out of his head.

"You cringe from a man's fight!" taunted the Argentinian, who was enjoying his sport. "It is your blood—the yellow in it must always crop up——"

"Shut up and fight!" yelled Plute furiously.

Madoras' retort was to shower blows on Plute's head, until his face was speckled with crimson welts. Blood dripped from his chin and trickled from a cut across his forehead. Under his clothes, which were glued tight in places, his back, sides and front were imprinted with stripes that burned like a caustic. There was wire woven in Madoras' lash and it brought blood where the tip touched.

Stumbling about and scarcely able in the haze of things to keep track of his jumpy enemy, Plute realized that he was on the toboggan for certain defeat. His ears seemed plugged up with the blood surging through his head. His right arm was weary from swinging the heavy whip and all his muscles ached.

Then abruptly he saw that his mount had shied into Stampede Gulch and joined a group of other horses huddling there. Among them he saw the proud lifted head of Lorcha! The sight bolstered him like a draft of alcohol.

"No wonder you're in such a big hurry, you damn hoss-thief!" Plute panted. "You better beat me—or they'll be a hangin' with you playin' the main rôle!"

A semblance of a grin flickered on Madoras' face. He stood in scant danger of losing the fight and knew it. The punishment he was administering was too terrific for any man to bear up under long. Madoras was not unscathed himself, but his endurance was not being tested as was Plute's.

"The dog loses his nerve!" he snarled, crowding Plute and aiming for his face. "Mebbe you would like to run! But I'll see that you do not quit, gringo!"

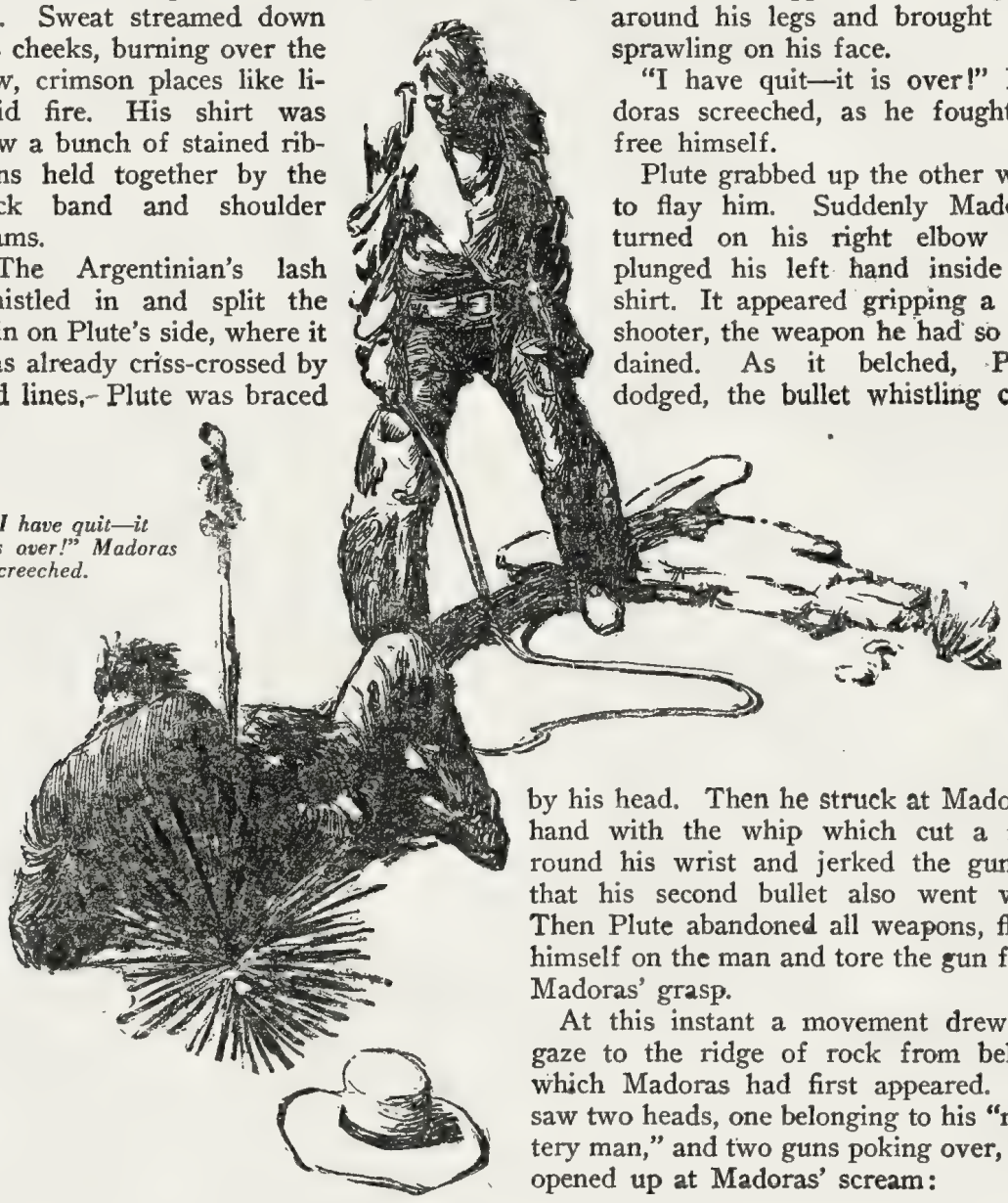
Plute's face did not change. It was set to resist the shock of pain as the whip fell, his mouth open wide as he panted for air. Sweat streamed down his cheeks, burning over the raw, crimson places like liquid fire. His shirt was now a bunch of stained ribbons held together by the neck band and shoulder seams.

The Argentinian's lash whistled in and split the skin on Plute's side, where it was already criss-crossed by red lines. Plute was braced and did not wince, but swung his whip so that it struck Madoras' weapon close to his hand and whirled around it. He gave a jerk and Madoras stood disarmed.

Before he could spring forward and retrieve his weapon, Plute drove him back with desperate blows of his whip. As the lash bit deep into his swarthy skin, the Argentinian howled like a scalded hound. There was no guard from the lacerating rawhide, and Plute poured it on with as much mercy as Madoras had been shown all through the one-sided battle. Madoras at last tried to run, cursing in his native tongue. Plute wrapped the whiplash around his legs and brought him sprawling on his face.

"I have quit—it is over!" Madoras screeched, as he fought to free himself.

Plute grabbed up the other whip to flay him. Suddenly Madoras turned on his right elbow and plunged his left hand inside his shirt. It appeared gripping a six-shooter, the weapon he had so disdained. As it belched, Plute dodged, the bullet whistling close by his head. Then he struck at Madoras' hand with the whip which cut a ring round his wrist and jerked the gun so that his second bullet also went wild. Then Plute abandoned all weapons, flung himself on the man and tore the gun from Madoras' grasp.



"I have quit—it is over!" Madoras screeched.

At this instant a movement drew his gaze to the ridge of rock from behind which Madoras had first appeared. He saw two heads, one belonging to his "mystery man," and two guns poking over, that opened up at Madoras' scream:

"Kill him! Don't let him——"

Plute was aware of the sudden break in Madoras' yell, as he flung himself on his knees and aimed for the two heads showing above the rock. They dodged back an instant and Plute looked to Madoras, who was just swinging up his, Plute's weapon, which he had found where it had dropped during the fight. Plute did not think out his action, but pulled the trigger. The Argentinian's swarthy face convulsed as he rooted the ground and lay writhing, with feeble groans.

All firing ceased when Plute swung his weapon back to the rock where the snipers had been, and he saw no sign of them to shoot at. As he guessed swiftly, there was only one escape from behind the ridge of rock. He headed across the mouth of Stampede Gulch at a staggering run, and blocked that avenue when the snipers stumbled into view, headed evidently for the horses up the gulch. They stopped dead in their tracks as they faced his rigid gun.

"Just stay right there!" gasped Plute. "But let loose of the cannons."

The clatter of their guns on the rock was echoed by the pound of swift hoofs. Plute saw the Diamond Y boss sweep into Stampede Gulch on his lathered white stallion, and pause for a second or so over Madoras. Then the other three men caught his eye, and when he saw Plute's condition he came at a run.

"I don't know—but I think I killed Madoras," Plute greeted him. "I had to do it or——"

"He's not dead," said Crosby rapidly, "but it wouldn't matter a bit if he was. I just heard about him from the sheriff. He's the slickest horse-thief in the country, and got a killing or so to his discredit. Nothing but a common Mex, born a peon in Sonora, posing as a native of South America, and picking up horses like a magnet does pins. I believe it was him stole our horses——"

"I know it. There they are," Plute broke in, pointing up Stampede Gulch to the group of horses.

"Glory be!" exclaimed Crosby. "Plute, I'm sure tickled to get 'em back!" Then his attention returned to the sorry spectacle Plute made, standing in his lacerated shirt that bared a torso vivid with welts and blood. His face was as badly cut up. "But man alive, what have you been through—a razor fight or a rock slide?"

Painfully, Plute put away his, or Madoras' gun, and replied with a wry grimace. "It's a game of slow murder called the 'Argentine' that Madoras invited me into to get even. There's the kind of weapons we used."

He indicated the tangled whips stretched out like huge blacksnakes that had died in combat and remained interlocked in the last position of their death struggle. Despite his torture, Plute called up a weak grin.

"I promised Madoras he'd get hung for his hoss stealin'. But I recommend changin' it to that 'Argentine' game he likes so good. It's punishment enough to fit any crime!"

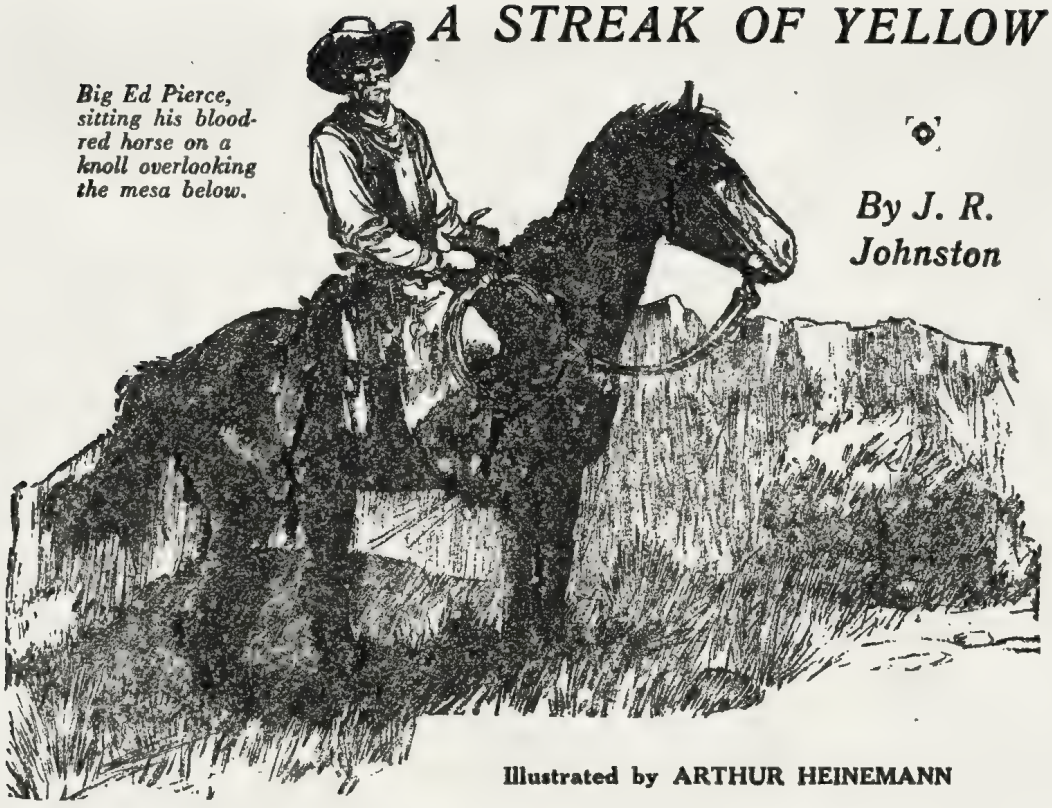
STRONG DEMAND PREVAILED AT DENVER MARKET IN 1926 FOR FEMALE CONSIGNMENTS

SHIPPERS to the Denver market during the fall season of 1926 frequently made the statement that their cow consignments sold more readily and to better advantage than their steers. Cows were in strong demand at all times and heifers also sold readily. Feeding cows and heifers especially were wanted and found ready outlet. Steers also sold to good advantage, but the price was not quite so satisfactory compared to the year before as on cows.

The reason for this condition is quite evident. Feeders of cows made money on their operations during the winter of 1925-26 while many of those who had steers in their feedlots came out with the balance on the wrong side of the ledger. The feeder buyers, influenced by this result of the year before, decided to feed cows this year. The increased competition for female stock resulted in stronger prices throughout the entire fall season, with not enough stock to go around.

Steers were good property at all times and sold to good advantage. However, with the demand for cows so strong, it was natural that this class of stock should sell relatively higher. (*From "Denver Daily Record Stockman."*)

A STREAK OF YELLOW



Big Ed Pierce, sitting his blood-red horse on a knoll overlooking the mesa below.

By J. R. Johnston

Illustrated by ARTHUR HEINEMANN

It took a hot-lead situation to prove a few things.

EVEN before he reached big Ed Pierce, sitting his blood-red horse on a knoll overlooking the mesa below, "Sandy" Moore knew he was in for it. The way the regal old cattleman glowered at him from under his bushy brows was enough to tell him that. What it was that the owner of the Circle P had against him, he did not know, unless it was something concerning the stampede he and the other punchers had just brought to a turbulent end.

"Howdy, boss," he said, reining in before Pierce. "Jim said yuh wanted to see me."

The rancher glared at him in mingled anger and disgust. He finally controlled both long enough to speak.

"See yuh? Yo're damned right I want to see yuh! Why the hell didn't yuh mill that herd long before this? You an' Sam Burnett were on guard. If yuh'd had any nerve, any sense, yuh could have turned the leaders from that canyon an' saved me them sixty head. But instead of that yuh let 'em run right along it, an' sixty prime beef steers are shoved over an' killed. What kind of a puncher are yuh, anyhow?"

Hot blood surged into Moore's cheeks. He was young, just twenty-three, and youth resents disparaging remarks about its courage. An angry retort leaped to his tongue, but he forced it back and turned away. He owed Ed Pierce too much to break with him at such slight provocation. Pierce had taken him in years before, when his dad had been killed in a range war, and had taken the place of a father. No matter what injustice he suffered, he would bear it rather than cause a rift between them.

Nevertheless, it hurt him terribly to think that his courage had been questioned. Pride forbade that he tell how he had attempted to swing the stampede away from the canyon, how he had nearly been caught in the vortex of charging, maddened cattle and flung to his death. Only just in time, seeing the futility of further effort, had he whirled his horse

and raced to safety through a narrow lane momentarily opening through the sea of tossing horns. Of this he said not a word, and his silence irked the man who had been his father's best friend.

"Well, what yuh got to say about it?" Pierce demanded testily. "I suppose yuh'll lie out of it some way, but I'm willin' to listen."

After that, of course, the young cowboy would not have defended himself if the cattleman had begged him on bended knees. He gazed down upon the mesa where the late stampeding steers were still milling slowly, his mind a seething chaos of discordant thoughts.

"Aw, hell!" the rancher said disgustedly. "Ain't even got the guts to brazen it out. You an' that worthless pal of yore'n won't never be no good. If it wasn't for yore old dad I'd give yuh yore time an' tell yuh to drift."

Moore flared up at that.

"An' by God," he cried hotly, "if it wasn't for dad I'd take it, too! Chew on that awhile!"

Loyalty to his pal made him say what he would not say for himself:

"As for Sam, his horse stepped in a gopher hole an' piled him. Just like you to expect a man on foot to stop eight hundred steers."

Pierce grinned sarcastically. "Yuh don't say? I suppose yuh've got some such cock-an'-bull story to alibi yoreself with, too?"

"Well, if I have," Moore burst out, "you'll never hear it from me! I don't give a tinker's damn what yuh think—nor any other kind of a damn! You can go plumb to hell an' roast!"

The old cattleman smiled at the straight back in front of him. Whatever he thought of Moore's courage, he was secretly pleased at the outburst.

"All right, let's forget it. Go get Sam an' come to town with me. That pedigreed stallion I bought from that New Mexico outfit came in this mornin'. The agent told me over the phone that he's sorta wild, an' I may need help to haze him home. You two oughta be of some use around here."

Without another word or a backward glance, Moore rode down to the mesa and stopped where several cowboys were grouped together watching the herd. He returned in a few minutes with a slender, wiry puncher about his own age. Pierce chuckled to himself as they came up to him. He knew by the fire in Burnett's eyes that Moore had told him of the accusation. Silently he fell in with them, and as silently they rode to Hutchins, a tiny cowtown on the G. & H. Railroad, where the stallion was waiting for his new master.

Pierce's ranch, the Circle P, was noted all through the Southwest for its prime beef steers. They never failed to bring the top price from cattle buyers, even when the market was low. But the rancher's heart was completely wrapped up in a herd of horses, thoroughbreds, all of them. For years he had been building up the band, until now he had nearly a hundred head of the finest horses in the country.

For safety's sake, the thoroughbreds were kept in a valley north of the ranch, a valley walled in on all four sides, well watered and ideal for grazing. The towering cliffs were unscalable, and the only entrance and exit was a high pass across which a three strand barb wire fence had been strung, and which was always guarded by a Circle P man who lived in a tiny shack under a bluff. Several times, agents of Mexican revolutionist generals had attempted to buy the herd, but Pierce had invariably refused to sell to them.

In Hutchins the rancher led his men directly to a box car standing on a siding before a loading pen. As they dismounted and left their horses with trailing reins, the local agent of the railroad came out of his tiny station house and greeted them raucously.

"Howdy, Pierce!" he called. "After that stallion, I suppose!"

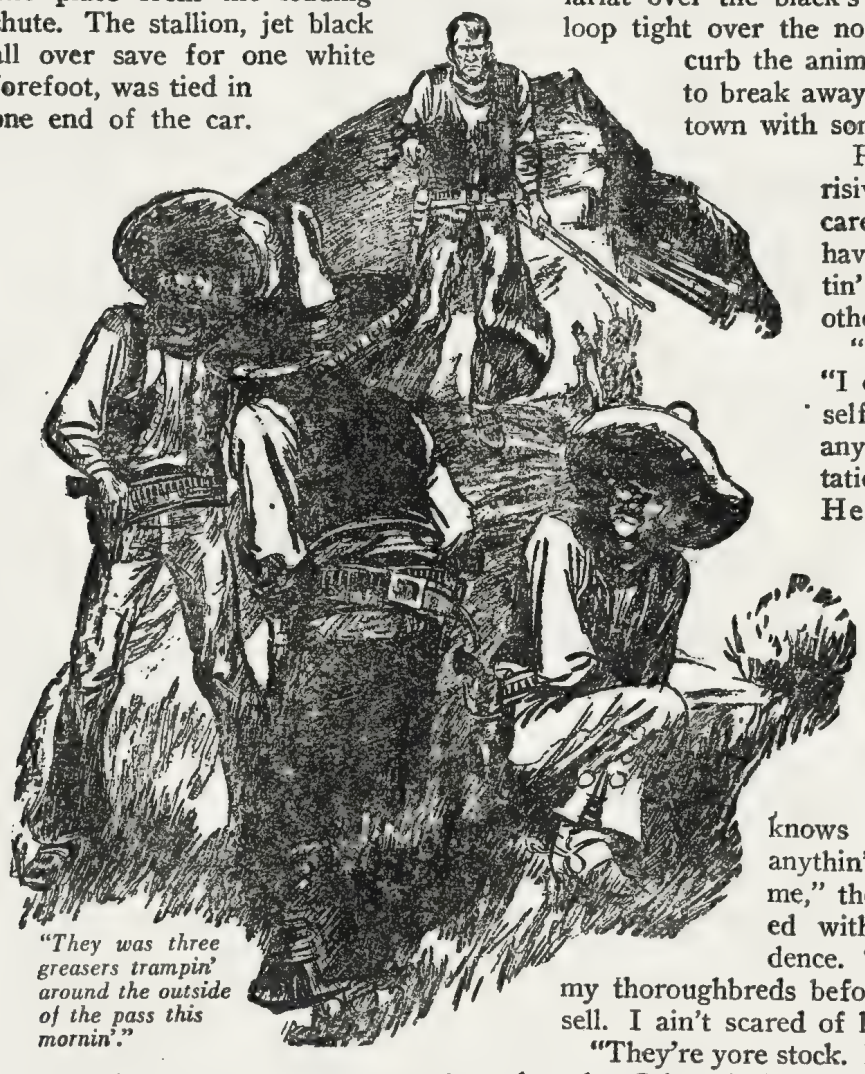
"Yeah. Looked at him yet?"

"Uh-huh. Watered him for yuh awhile ago. They didn't send a man with him since it took only a day on the road. There was plenty of feed in the car, though, so

he's all right. And he sure is a beaut."

"That's all I buy," Pierce told him warmly. Praise for his horses always won his heart. "Well, let's get him out an' see how he's stood the trip."

The agent pulled the door open while Moore and Burnett hauled the gangplank into place from the loading chute. The stallion, jet black all over save for one white forefoot, was tied in one end of the car.



"They was three greasers trampin' around the outside of the pass this mornin'."

He rolled his eyes and snorted and pranced about as Pierce climbed in, but the rancher spoke to him softly, endearingly, and after a moment the horse allowed him to come forward and gently stroke his velvety nose.

As their boss led his latest acquisition down the chute, Moore forgot his resentment momentarily and gave vent to an "Oh, man!" of pure joy. He loved good horses almost as much as Pierce, and the black stallion, with his arched neck and proud, mincing steps, won him completely. Burnett, at his side, was all eyes, taking in the points of the horse in swift, appreciative appraisal.

"Better keep yore eye on him for awhile, Pierce," the agent advised as the cattleman slowly put the noose of his lariat over the black's head and drew a loop tight over the nose, with which to curb the animal if he attempted to break away. "Rus Snell is in town with some greasers."

Pierce snorted derisively. "What do I care for Snell? He'll have a hard time gettin' this horse or any other away from me."

"Well," dubiously, "I dunno. Suit yoreself. Snell ain't got any too good a reputation, yuh know. He's lookin' for horses for that Mex bandit, Pancho Garcia, an' from what I hear of him, he's not particular whether he buys 'em or not."

"Huh, Snell knows better'n to try anythin' off color with me," the rancher answered with supreme confidence. "He's tried to buy my thoroughbreds before, an' I wouldn't sell. I ain't scared of him."

"They're yore stock. I'm just tellin' yuh what I heard. If yuh don't think there's anythin' to it, why that's yore business. Lookit, here he comes now."

A short, heavy set man was approaching them on a singlefooting sorrel. Two hard-faced, shifty-eyed Mexicans were following him. Snell himself was not particularly prepossessing of appearance. He had the look of not being very scrupulous in his dealings with others. As he rode up, Moore's eyes narrowed. Snell was looking over the stallion with more than

a casual interest showing in his eyes.

"Mornin', men," he greeted them. "Bought another stallion, I see, Pierce. Looks mighty good to me. Say, how about them horses? Gonna sell me fifty head?"

The rancher grinned good naturedly.

"My answer's the same as last month, an' the month before that, Snell," he replied. "I'm not sellin' a single one."

"Garcia needs 'em bad," Snell argued. "He wants 'em for a flyin' squadron he's organizin'. Pay you two-hundred-fifty—gold."

Pierce laughed shortly.

"Well, that's higher than yore last offer," he admitted, "but it still ain't high enough. Five hundred—a thousand—wouldn't buy one of my thoroughbreds. I'm not sellin' 'em to be shot up."

"Yeah, I figured yuh'd turn me down." Snell said, visibly disappointed.

As he rode away, Moore glanced significantly at his partner and jerked a thumb to indicate the agent of Garcia. Burnett nodded knowingly. In each of their minds was the thought that the stampede earlier in the morning had a deeper root than appeared. The meeting with Snell, long suspected of shady deals, accentuated their suspicions. They said nothing about it to Pierce during the ride home, however. The attitude of their boss toward them did not invite confidences.

The black stallion, whose name was Whitefoot, led easily, after the improvised hackamore had shut his wind several times when he attempted to bite the horses of the three Circle P men. But when he sighted the band of horses, from the pass in the walled-in valley, it took the combined strength of Pierce and the two cowboys to hold him. He jerked and pranced and pawed in his eagerness to be free, sending shrill blasts from his nostrils to announce the advent of a new king. And the way the heads of the grazing thoroughbreds shot up from the grass and turned toward them, Moore knew that they were fully aware of it.

From the shack, close to one wall of the pass, came bowlegged "Nevada" Jackson, grinning from ear to ear.

"That's sure some horse," he declared vehemently. "He'll raise merry hell with that band, boss. Won't he be one grand king, though?"

"Sure will," agreed Pierce. "Open the gate, Nevada, an' then come back an' help us take the rope off him. He sure wants to get loose."

It took all four men to hold the black long enough to loosen the noose around its neck and pull it over the proud head. Once free, Whitefoot whirled into a mad run, glancing saucily over his shoulder at the watching cowboys and kicking his heels upward in a burst of exuberance. Pierce rode up to the fence to have an unhampered view of the meeting of the herd with its new sovereign, and Moore grasped the opportunity to have a brief talk with Jackson.

"Listen, Nevada," he said in a low tone. "Have yuh seen anyone snoopin' around here lately?"

Jackson looked up at him queerly.

"I dunno how yuh guessed it, but they was three greasers trampin' around the outside of the pass early this mornin'. I ordered 'em away but they wouldn't vamoose until I unlimbered the ol' Winchester an' sifted a few slugs past their heads. Why?"

Moore told him of the stampede and of his suspicion that it was of human origin. When he remarked that Snell was back in the region and was wanting horses badly, Jackson scratched his chin thoughtfully.

"H'm. I don't like the looks of that shifty hombre. He'd steal the shirt off yore back if he thought yuh wouldn't catch him at it."

"Uh-huh. That's the way I figure him, but the old man don't bother his head a-tall about it. I saw Snell admirin' Whitefoot in town this mornin'. Better keep a close watch nights. Sh-h! Here comes the boss. Don't say anythin' to him about it."

"Sam," Pierce said unexpectedly when he reached the little group, "you relieve Nevada. I reckon there's plenty of grub an' feed in the shack. One of the boys will come around some time to-morrow or next day to see if yuh need anythin'.

Keep yore eyes open to see that Whitefoot don't take it into his head to bust the fence an' lead the herd out of the valley. He's new to this country, yuh know, an' yuh never can tell what a new horse'll do."

Nevada got his horse from a leanto behind the shack and saddled up. Moore waved a cheery good-by to his partner and followed Pierce and Jackson out of the pass.

IT was two nights later that a dull, ominous rumble sifted into the Circle P bunkhouse where the cowboys were playing poker or mending torn clothing. For a moment no one seemed to notice it. Then it swelled, grew louder.

"What the hell's that?" queried Nevada Jackson, laying down a full house and raking in a small pot. "Dang funny for thunder this time of year."

"Yeah, it is," began Moore, and sat bolt upright as the true nature of the "thunder" drove into his brain. "My God, men! The herd! It's stampedin' again!"

Like madmen the punchers leaped to their feet, unheeding the scattering of the cards and money, the crashing of falling chairs, and raced out of the door to the corral. Jim Holland, the foreman, ran to the ranch house and hammered on the door until Pierce stuck his head out, demanding to know what in seven hells the noise was all about. An instant later he was dashing for the corral, bellowing for his horse.

Working feverishly, throwing their hulls on nervous horses and cinching them tight, it seemed an eternity to the eight men before they were ready. Almost together they leaped into their saddles and galloped out of the corral westward.

That is, seven men sped westward, toward the broad mesa where the herd was. The eighth cut sharply away once clear of the corral and raced north. Pierce saw him, recognized him in the light of the moon.

"Moore!" he roared. "Moore, come back here! What the devil do yuh mean runnin' off that way?"

But the cowboy galloped on without a backward look, plying his quirt vigorously.

"Damn him!" sputtered Pierce, half minded to draw his gun and send a bullet after the fleeing man. "The coward! Scairt of his skin! Well, he wouldn't be much good, anyway. Come on, boys, let the pup go."

Fanlike, the seven riders spread out as soon as they reached the mesa, each knowing instinctively what to do. Some darted toward the head of the herd, which fortunately was running toward them from the bedding grounds on the extreme northwestern edge of the mesa, but toward the deep canyon as well where Moore had so nearly been entrapped three days before. Other riders rushed along the bellowing stream of cattle, striving to force the entire line inward, away from the menace that cut diagonally across the course.

Pierce, spurring his blood-red mount savagely, reached the head of the stampede a bare hundred yards from the black line of the canyon. Frantically he and two of his men began pushing, shoving, coaxing the leaders eastward, firing their guns under the very noses of the maddened cattle. At first it seemed impossible to turn them, but gradually the roar and flash of the forty-fives, intermingled with raucous, high-pitched yells, had their effect. Two or three steers swerved aside, and slowly others followed.

Unconscious of his own danger, the cattleman rushed on, intent on turning the stampede northward. The two riders behind him had already whirled their horses and sped desperately back along the brink of the canyon before they should be hemmed in. It was only then that Pierce, glancing ahead, realized his peril.

Too late to turn back, for frantic steers were already closing the point of the narrow wedge that had gained safety for the two cowboys. His face blanched as several of the leaders cut in ahead of his laboring mount, now running parallel with the canyon but with no room to spare.

He redoubled his efforts to swing the cattle aside, efforts that seemed despairingly weak and futile. The great mass of the herd, blindly treading on the heels of its leaders, pushed on relentlessly. The

blood-red horse was forced outward to the canyon rim. For a moment he fought desperately, but the pressure was too great. The ground crumbled under him, and with a scream of terror he pitched into the black depths.

Even as the horse fell, Pierce flung himself from the saddle to the back of a steer beside him. There he clung, fingers digging deep into the hide, unable because of the crush of other steers to get his legs down and lock the spurs beneath the animal's belly. For an instant he thought he too would be tumbled to the sharp rocks at the bottom of the canyon, but now the stampede was swinging more and more away from the danger.

As soon as the canyon no longer yawned beneath him, Pierce jumped to the ground, very nearly being impaled by the sharp horns of a maddened steer behind him, and hastily scrambled out of the way. When he had reached a point a hundred yards distant, he turned and watched. How many of his cattle already had followed the blood-red horse he did not know, but as he looked, fully a dozen disappeared. Then the tail of the herd thundered past, and he sat down weakly on the ground. Holland galloped up, inquiring anxiously if he had been hurt.

"No, Jim, I'm all right," he panted. "Go on, stop 'em."

In half an hour the cattle had been successfully milled and had nearly stopped circling. Four of the punchers sought out their boss and with great sighs of relief dismounted in front of him.

"By God," swore Holland, "that sure was a job. What the hell do you suppose started them fool cattle this time?"

"It gets me," answered Pierce, scratching his head in perplexity. "Danged if I can figure it out. I shouldn't think that——"

A mile or two north of the mesa, over the still rumbling herd, came a sudden flash and the roar of an explosion. Pierce stopped talking with his mouth wide open in astonishment.

"For gosh sake!" cried Nevada Jackson. "That's up in the pass. C'mon, fellers, there's hell to pay!"

"Here, boss!" offered a lanky puncher. "Take my horse. I'll stay here an' keep an eye on the herd."

"Yeah! But go down into the canyon first thing, will yuh? See if—if Red is. . . . Well, you know what to do."

MOORE had not run away like a coward, as Pierce supposed. Divining that the horse herd was in danger, he had dashed straight for the pass. With suspicion in his mind, he did not gallop openly up to the shack, but dismounted some distance away and went forward on foot, keeping in the shadows as much as possible. As he reached the shack, he saw the wire gate of the fence lying on the ground.

There was no light in the building. The door was wide open. Drawing his gun, Moore tiptoed cautiously in. A board squeaked treacherously under his feet. In one corner a dark form squirmed and pounded hard boot heels on the floor. Gun held ready for immediate use, Moore went to it, bending close. Then he swiftly holstered the forty-five and untied the man the form proved to be.

"What happened, Sam?" he questioned, pulling a gag from his partner's mouth.

Burnett spat out a bit of rag and rubbed his cramped muscles.

"Snell an' four greasers jumped me. Slipped up an' had me covered before I knew they were around. Thank God you came, Sandy. They're down in the valley now roundin' up the horses. We can stop 'em if we hurry."

"Good! I suspected that would be the game. Pierce an' the rest of the boys are after another stampede. That's what sent me up here. Where's yore six-gun?"

"Snell took it. I've got a rifle, though. The dirty horse-thieves missed that. It's over there behind the door."

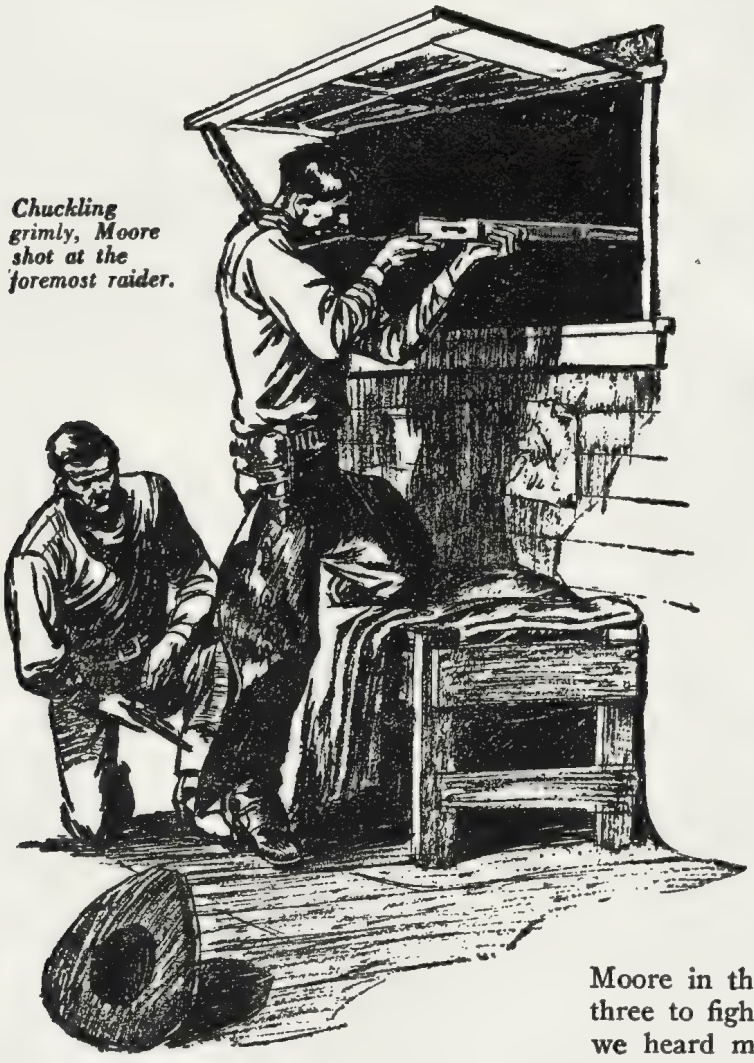
"All right. Now listen. I'll run out an' close the gate. That'll stop the horses an' we'll give Snell a reception he won't expect. We've got 'em just where we want 'em."

He scurried out and quickly closed the opening in the fence, through which the raiders must come. As he did so, he heard

the drumming of hooves approaching from the valley. The moon was not very bright, but its light was sufficient to reveal a dark mass pounding up the pass. Faint shouts urged it on. Plainly, the raiders were desirous of getting their work done as swiftly as possible.

With a chuckle at thought of the surprise awaiting Snell, who no doubt was confident that his ruse had succeeded in drawing all the Circle P men away from the ranch and the proximity of the valley, Moore went back to the shack, closed the door, and pulled a table against it.

"They're coming, Sam," he told his partner. "Here, you take my gun an' let me have the rifle. I left mine on my saddle, but I got plenty of shells in my belt."



Chuckling grimly, Moore shot at the foremost raider.

Watching from the window in the end of the building overlooking the valley, they saw the thoroughbreds, led by Whitefoot, come to a sliding halt at the fence. The horses milled around nervously, glancing wildly about and sniffing at the barbed wire strands. Shouts in mongrel Spanish urged them on, and when they refused to obey, two riders advanced along a towering rock wall to investigate. The Circle P men could plainly hear them arguing when they found the closed gate.

"I tell you, Jose," one of them said, "I left open this gate. Si, of it I am positeeve."

"Ah, amigo, but you see it is now shut. Therefore you must have closed it, for did we not leave the foolish young gringo tied with his own rope? But no matter, open it, for Señor Snell is becoming angry."

Grumbling incoherently, his companion dismounted and started to lift the wire loop that held the gate fast. From the shack came a sudden flash. A bullet shattered the wrist of the Mexican's reaching hand. With a yell of mingled pain and surprise, the man stumbled backward. Startled at the unexpected roar of the rifle, the horses bolted back the way they had come, upsetting and trampling to death one of the raiders who could not get out of the way in time. The wounded man followed at a shambling run, urged to greater speed by bullets whining uncomfortably close to his head. Jose, his comrade, had already vanished around a protecting shoulder of rock.

"If there were only five of 'em," grinned Moore in the darkness, "we've only got three to fight now, providin' that scream we heard meant one got killed by the horses. The Mex I shot oughta be out of

commission for awhile. Sam, I'll watch this end. You take the side so's Snell won't be able to slip by in the shadows across the pass. Shoot at any movement."

For several breathless minutes, the two cowboys watched and listened, knowing that as soon as Snell discovered that the only way out of the trap was past the shack the gang would be back. The rush came without warning.

Moore had time for only a hurried "Here they come!" Four riders, bent low over the necks of their horses, bore down upon them, guns stabbing at them with orange flame. The cowboys worked their guns with feverish speed, pulling the trigger as fast as they could align the sights.

A horse collapsed, throwing its rider sprawling and tumbling over and over. The others dashed on, unheeding. It looked for an instant that they would win through, but a hundred feet or so from the shack the raiders found the hail of bullets too much to face. They whirled their horses and raced out of range into the lower pass, where rocks hid them.

"Yeah!" jeered Burnett. "Ain't got the nerve of a gopher. They might have made it—one or two of 'em. Gimme some shells, Sandy, I'm all out. I've been stuffin' 'em into this old gun of yore'n like wood into a furnace. What do yuh suppose they'll try next?"

"I dunno. Maybe they'll try to scale the walls. You know as well as I do that no man could climb them cliffs, so they'll be back pretty soon. They know they've got to get out before somebody else comes an' cooks their hash."

He released the rifle and watched carefully. Five minutes—ten passed, and then on the still air sounded a muffled curse as someone stumbled and fell in the shadows. Another minute passed. From behind an abutment appeared a man with a short, round package under his arm. He glanced cautiously about and came toward the shack, hunched over and barely distinguishable. Three others were close on his heels, the short, heavy set figure of Snell in the lead. The man who brought up the rear had one wrist bound up, but the other hand held a revolver.

Chuckling grimly, Moore shot at the foremost raider. The bullet missed, but it was close enough to startle the man. A yell of pure terror escaped him. He cast the package from him as if it were an unclean thing, whirled and charged pell mell into his comrades.

Snell was bowled over by the sudden rush and flung against the feet of the men behind him. These stumbled over him and fell in a thrashing tangle of arms and legs. In that instant Moore aimed carefully at the fallen package and fired again. This time his bullet struck its mark squarely. A blinding flash leaped upward, accompanied by the deafening roar of an explosion. A few seconds later fragments of rock rained down upon the roof of the shack.

"My God!" burst out Burnett. "What was that?"

Moore grinned and thrust a shell into the rifle.

"Dynamite," he answered shortly.

"Dynamite! The skunks! Gonna blow us up, eh?"

"Kinda looks like it," his partner admitted. "It seemed funny that anybody should be luggin' a package around at a time like this, unless he intended to use it, so I took a chance an' shot at it instead of the man."

Burnett shuddered. "Phew! What do yuh suppose it did to them gents?"

"I dunno." Moore grinned whimsically. "I dunno, but I betcha it didn't do 'em a bit of good."

The two cowboys lapsed into silence and listened for some further movement of the harassed raiders. But no sound reached them, and after a while they slipped outside and began a reconnaisance of the pass. Near the spot where the explosion had taken place, they found four bodies. Two of the raiders were dead, killed by falling rocks. One of the survivors was the Mexican with the shattered wrist. The other was Snell, his leg pinioned to the ground by a jagged boulder.

"For the love of God!" he whined at them. "Take this rock off my leg. It's killin' me!"

"Huh!" grunted Moore unfeelingly,

laying the rifle against a rock. "It'd take more'n a little pebble fallin' on yuh to kill yuh. Hell, quit yore whimperin'. You'll live to do plenty years in prison."

Nevertheless, with Burnett's help, he rolled the boulder off the tortured leg as gently as possible, though Snell screamed again and again in agony. Then they carried him and the wounded Mexican into the shack, where Burnett lighted a battered lantern and began roughly to inspect the injuries.

"I'll go scare up a doctor," volunteered Moore. "They don't deserve it, but I can't let 'em suffer, even if they are low down horse-thieves. Besides, Snell can't be moved with that broken leg."

He went out and found his horse where he had left him at the entrance to the pass. He had just climbed into the saddle when he heard horses coming at a mad gallop from the direction of the Circle P. He drew back into the shadows, wondering if the newcomers would prove to be more of Snell's gang, but when they came into view he had no difficulty in recognizing Pierce in the van. So he rode slowly to meet them.

"Oh, it's you, huh?" his boss greeted him with a suspicious glance. "What did you run away for? Scared? Never mind, I'll settle with you after a while. What's been goin' on here?"

Moore controlled himself with an effort, gritting his teeth savagely to keep down the angry words.

"Hasn't Nevada told you yet?" he asked evenly.

"Nevada? Told me what?"

"That raiders have been tryin' to steal yore horses?"

"What the hell you talking about?"

"I'll tell you straight!" Moore cried angrily. "If you wasn't a damn fool, in more ways than one, you'd have seen long ago that somebody started them stampedes to draw everybody away from the valley so's they could run off yore horses. I guessed it the first time, an' Nevada cinched my suspicion by tellin' me he had chased three greasers away from the pass durin' the first stampede. There's only one gent who'd steal yore thoroughbreds. If you can't guess who he is, come up to the shack."

Ignoring Pierce's questions, he led the way back to the shack. When all the riders had dismounted, he threw open the door. They crowded in after him. There were many exclamations of surprise as they caught sight of the sullen prisoners.

"Snell!" blurted Pierce.

"Yeah, it's Snell," agreed Moore. "There's three more of his gang out there in the pass, dead. When you refused to sell him the horses he wanted, he decided to take them. The first time he tried was in broad daylight an' he failed. Then he met you in town an' offered yuh more money. You refused, yuh remember, an' the sight of Whitefoot made him want the herd all the more. So to-night, after dark, he stampeded the cattle again—I haven't asked him yet how he did it, but you know how easy it is—surprised Sam here an' went down into the valley to drive up the horses.

"I guessed what was up an' instead of helpin' you with the cattle, I burned the breeze up here an' found Sam tied up in his own rope. Between us we managed to hold the horses an' capture or kill every one of the raiders."

"What was the explosion we heard?"

"They tried to dynamite us. One of Snell's men had a few sticks in his saddle bags—I guess the gang was used to blowin' up banks an' like that—an' when the feller brought it out, I set it off with a bullet."

Pierce regarded him seriously a moment, a growing respect in his eyes.

"It looks to me like I've done you boys dirt," he said ruefully. "I pretty near got myself killed in that stampede to-night, an' two of the boys tell me you only saved yoreself by doin' just what they did. An' here all the time I thought yuh was scared an' was running away."

He paused and glared around the room at his punchers.

"There ain't a bit of yellow in them two boys!" he cried, slamming a huge fist down upon the table for greater emphasis. "An' by God, if I hears any of yuh say different, I'll beat yuh to a pulp!"

GUNS OF THE DOUBLE CROSS

A COMPLETE COWBOY NOVEL

By Army Adams

"Stick 'em up, pronto, an' stick 'em up high!"

CHAPTER I

A Fool for Luck

"CORKY" KILLRAIN had always thought Wyoming's Indian summer the best of her seasons. But as he stopped on the edge of the board walk in front of The Bit and Spur Saloon, to look down Sheridan's rutty street with its hitch-racks and cow-horses, he was not thinking of the season, the westering sun, nor the little cow-town's two rows of false-fronted buildings and their attendant traffic. What he saw was in his mind rather than in front of his keen and lean bronzed face, with its smoky-blue eyes which measured the world so fearlessly.

For two years he had been a ranger for the Wyoming Cattlemen's Association, working directly under their secretary, Gerry, at Cheyenne. For three months now he had been drawing no assignments, and only half pay.

Pulling his Sweetwater Stetson lower on his forehead, he turned and clinked his spurs across the sidewalk and into the saloon, the spring-steeled limberness of twenty-four in his step. Merely nodding his greeting to the bartender who was drawing a glass of beer, he crossed to the far side of the room where the papers and magazines were scattered on a table.

A couple of miners were playing pool, and three railroad men were playing freeze-out for the drinks. The big gaming tables were idle. Scraps of conversation, floating back and forth, dealt with the train hold-up of five days ago.

Corky stood looking down at the papers, scanning the headlines, his gray sweater coat just covering the butts of his two guns which hung low on his thighs from a belt well filled with cartridges.

"'Sheriff Scott reports little progress on Burlington express car robbery. He says. . . .'" read the ranger as he dropped into a chair and jerked up the paper to read more.

"By 'little' they mean *none,*" conjectured Corky moodily as he dwelt on the first line. "I know train hold-ups don't

Illustrated by
H. MELOY

Corky tackles the job of his life.

come under the work of the Asociation, but as long as Gerry didn't pay any attention to my report on the rustlin', he might 'a' answered my wire about helpin' Scott on this robbery. They're both in my territory. Damn this half-pay business, anyway!" He slammed down the paper. "Do they think I can't do the work, or that I'm crooked, or what?"

Corky was about as touchy as a man with a boil under his collar button. This rustling that was being pushed in the Harbin country was agitating the cattlemen considerably. It was under Sheriff Scott's jurisdiction; but he had not been able to stop it, and had paid no attention at all to the matter since the train hold-up.

Corky had some hunches as to what was going on, but he was supposed to follow a 'hands off' policy, unless notified by Gerry. This was no way to treat a man. He had a notion to break with Gerry and tackle Scott for a job.

All that held him back was the cancer-like suspicion that he was under a cloud at headquarters. He wanted to learn what this was, and have it cleared before making a charge.

Still and all, a man couldn't get along very far on half pay. Perhaps if he sent word to Gerry that he was going to quit and asked for a recommendation, he would get something started. He'd wait a day or so longer and if he didn't get word from Gerry, he'd tackle Scott for a job as extra deputy.

"Here comes the sheriff, now," said Corky. "Him and that brand inspector, Bronson. The sheriff might make progress if he'd get into the hills more instead of sendin' his deputy all the time."

Scott was a medium sized, knotty looking man in his forties. He had a thin face, watery eyes and roan colored hair. He wore his great hat creased down the center instead of dimpling the top, and his arms were longer in proportion to his body than were his legs. He seemed to be well liked, but he was not making much of a name for himself as an officer.

Corky knew both men well enough to

stop and talk to them, or take a drink with them, but he did not know whether they knew he was connected with the Association. As the two men approached the bar, Bronson, the brand inspector, beckoned to him.

Bronson was about the age of Scott, but carried his years better. Since becoming brand inspector, he did very little riding. Usually he wore a business suit of dark cloth for his work of going up and down the line, inspecting stock at the shipping points. He was a big man, with snake-dark eyes, a Roman nose and thin lips.

Coming forward, Corky saw that he had on a new black suit and his shoes were freshly shined. A small black Stetson was set level on his black stiff hair, and Corky, idly wondering if he had any Indian blood, could see where the nickname "Blackie" was a good fit.

"How come, big cowboy?" asked the sheriff as the ranger-puncher hoisted his boot to the foot-rail.

"Oh, so-so," was the non-committal reply of Corky as he poured himself a neat glass of Harpers. "Yuh're the one as should have a windy to spill. Anything new about the killers who bumped off the messenger in the train robbery the other night?"

The subject was a touchy one with the sheriff. He was so slow in answering that Corky thought he was going to ignore the question.

They crooked their elbows to a "Here's how!" and set their glasses on the bar. The sheriff asked Corky a question, instead of answering the one directed to him.

"D'yuh want a job as deputy for awhile? I kin use another good man right now."

Corky glanced at Scott, to see just what was meant, but the sheriff was looking at himself in the bar mirror.

"Name yuhr choice, boys, I'm buyin'," stated Corky before volunteering a reply to Scott's question. "I might take yuh up on that proposition, Sheriff. I'm expectin' a wire about some cattle, and if I don't get what I'm lookin' for by day after tomorrow—that'll be Wednesday—I'll be around to see yuh. Be in town?"

This was agreeable to Scott.

Without waiting for the sheriff to buy the third round of drinks, the brand inspector proposed a game of draw. Corky had gambled enough to know that he could never make his living that way, since he never could hold good cards; consequently he played very seldom. But he was in a black mood this afternoon and decided to sit in the game. He had only sixty dollars on him; still, he thought, this would last as long as the two men wanted to play.

They jerked their chairs up to a green-clothed deal table, and started with stacks of twenty-five dollars each. Since he did not care whether he won or lost, the cards fell in Corky's favor right from the start. Soon he was playing with the other men's money.

By the time the lamps had been lighted, and the roulette and faro started, it dawned on Corky that, from trying to squeeze him, the sheriff and the brand inspector had changed their tactics and were trying to gouge each other.

Corky shoved his hat back at a rakish angle on his blond head and settled into his seat to enjoy himself, as coldly placid as a snowstorm in his playing. All three men were getting good hands, but Corky seemed to be getting most of the best ones.

Around ten o'clock he raked in a hundred-and-fifty-dollar pot, shoved a handful of loose bills in his front overalls' pocket and called for drinks for the house.

"A fool for luck," snarled Bronson as he spat out a chewed cigar. Ordering whisky and a new deck of cards he brought another fold of bills from his pocket.

Corky was arranging his money in front of him. As he snapped a glance at the brand inspector to see if he had had too much whisky, Scott interrupted with a remark that had a sting to its tail.

"You're the fool, Blackie. Yuh been tryin' to warp me and layin' yuhrself wide open. But with this buckaroo holdin' the

cards he did, I couldn't get at yuh. I've lost enough for t'night. You fellahs can fight——"

CHAPTER II

Roaring Evidence

CORKY felt the whiff of fresh air in the smoke-fouled room, even as he heard the brittle command cracked out: "Stick 'em up, pronto, an' stick 'em up high!"

"Everybody line up with faces to the wall," came an order from another voice.

"Two of them," surmised Corky as he crimped the two bills in his fingers into a ball in the palm of his hand, just as his hands left the table to go above his head. Corky was not alarmed by the hold-up. But he was going to obey orders until he had an idea as to what the odds were in the set-up.

As he rose to his feet and had to smile at the slack jaw of the sheriff and the surprise on Blackie's face, he even wondered if this was a new pair of bandits or some of the rustlers and train robbers. If they were all the same gang, they were sure rushing their luck.

Walking towards the wall, Corky thrilled at the sight of the big ice-box on the same side of the room as the bar, down past an unused door. The doors at the top of the ice-box had mirrors to match the bar mirror!

They were not very large, but were large enough to give him a glimpse of two masked men encased in yellow slickers. One was standing guard at the side-street door, which gave him command of the whole room, the other was herding the saloon crowd to a line along the wall. When Corky stopped, he was still in position to look into the mirrors and watch what was going on behind him.

Having lined up the men, one bandit stuck his gun into its holster and started pawing the money from the tables into a sack. He then started down the line of men, as the robber by the door called forth his warning:

"Easy, fellows, easy! Stand gentle and yuh won't be salivated."

His partner was losing no time in making his clean-up. There were about twenty men in line, thought Corky, and he was about the center, with the sheriff on his left and the brand inspector on the left of the sheriff.

In about a minute, when the man with the sack came behind him, there would be a second or so when the sackman would be between Corky and the guard by the door. The ranger determined to use that short span of time.

He was hoping that these slicker-clad men were some of the bold train robbers and would give battle. He craved action and action he was going after. They had some of his money, too. Would the sheriff and the brand inspector back his play?

The bandit was at Blackie; he gave the brand inspector a good searching. When the bandit passed on to Scott, Blackie said something about what he would do the next time he saw the bandit.

The man chuckled and retorted: "You'll never see me again, so I'm not worrying."

Corky tensed, waiting warily. He saw the masked man take the sheriff's money, but he was apparently taking no guns. The man stepped edgewise towards the ranger.

The instant the bandit was in line with his partner by the door, Corky jerked his spurred right foot viciously up behind him, the rowel raking the bandit's shin bone and cutting into the kneecap. The robber gave a grunt of mingled pain and rage. Involuntarily he started to stoop to lift his wounded leg.

Corky had counted on this reaction to give him time to recover his balance and whirl. He had his right uppercut timed to the proper button. It connected with the point of the man's jaw and lifted him off his feet.

Corky grabbed him before he landed, to use him as a shield against the fire of the bandit by the door. That pirate's first shot crashed the mirror in the door of the ice-box.

Men turned, floundered, dropped to hands and knees. Shots were fired at random at the bandit by the door. One

hit a lamp. Corky and his victim plowed into the table where Corky had been playing cards, and the ranger judged from the feel of the man in his grip that he was knocked out.

Corky clawed out his gun and fired once at the doorman. There was bustle and confusion as someone lunged into him and the table. Shaking himself out of the tangle of legs and gun-shots, he came to his feet with his gun pointed towards the side door.

The bandit was gone. From out on the street came the swift drumming of diminishing hoof-beats; then silence. Came the slam of a door.

Corky slewed about. The sheriff, hunched forward, gun in hand, was standing above the slicker-clad bandit on the floor. Smoke was oozing from the barrel of the six-shooter, slowly stringing up to the sheriff's face which was strained and haggard as if he had just passed through a crisis. The odor of burned gunpowder mixed with the smoke of cigaret and cigar.

Corky bedded his own gun in its scabbard and stepped over to kneel by the bandit. The man was dead. The slicker had become his shroud. Lifting the twisted mask from the dead man's face, he heard a short gasp from the sheriff.

"'Pig' Diehl! Gone wrong. He was my deputy last year!" But in the exclamation, Corky thought he noted a merging tone of surprise, relief and satisfaction. Well, perhaps the sheriff was glad to get one robber to his credit, even if he was an ex-deputy; although the ranger thought it had not been necessary for Scott to shoot the bandit in the back while he was laid out. Why not arrest him and put him in jail?

Men were crowding around. Doors were opened and closed; men entered, while others went out thinking that the free bandit might come back or that the sheriff would want a posse.

"I'll get the coroner," volunteered Corky, picking up his hat.

The sheriff loaded his gun and holstered it. "Stand back, boys! Oh, Parker," he called to the saloon owner who first had made a run for the sack with the money.

On his way to the front door, Corky told the saloon man that he (Corky) had nearly two hundred dollars in the sack. The saloon man nodded assent. As he reached the door, Corky heard Scott deputizing Bronson.

Outside, men were standing by the entrance, a few trying to peek over the curtains. Brushing through them, Corky heard talk of the man in the slicker who had ridden away, and of the other bandit's horse which was now in front of the saloon.

CHAPTER III

The Chance for Action

THE coroner lived at the end of Main Street, in a house by the morgue. He was at home and came to the door in his slippers. Upon learning the circumstances he dressed quickly and plied Corky with questions as they hurried along, saying incidentally that he had heard the running horse pass his house.

Halfway to The Bit and Spur, they were met by the night telegraph operator with a wire for Corky. The coroner continued on, advising the ranger that he would hold the inquest at once and would need him there.

The wire was from Gerry. Taking out his code book, by the light of matches held by the operator Corky decoded the message.

"Report to Mostyn in Harbin on Thursday to work on Harbin Slippage."

"No answer," he told the operator, extending a brief "Good-night." He put the yellow slip in the code book and placed both in his pocket, walking on deep in thought.

Mostyn was one of the chief rangers who came around when he possibly could, to help the local Association men. Corky knew of him, but he had never before appeared on any case on which Corky was working.

The fact that Gerry had not said any-

thing about going ahead with the Harbin rustling trouble until he could send Mostyn out, rather nettled Corky. Something was wrong. It was not in keeping with Gerry's usual method of doing business.

Harbin lay sixty miles to the west on the other side of the Wasatch Mountains in Pima County, on a branch of the Burlington. Cattle from the Sheridan country were often shipped out of Harbin, and stock from the Harbin district often went out from Sheridan.

At first glance this might appear odd, but if there were any irregularities, they were supposed to be checked by the brand inspectors. It was an easy two-day ride to Harbin, even over the rough mountains.

Corky decided to start at once. He could use an extra day or two in the hills. He intended, by hard riding, to prove out some of his hunches, and to arrive in Harbin by Thursday night.

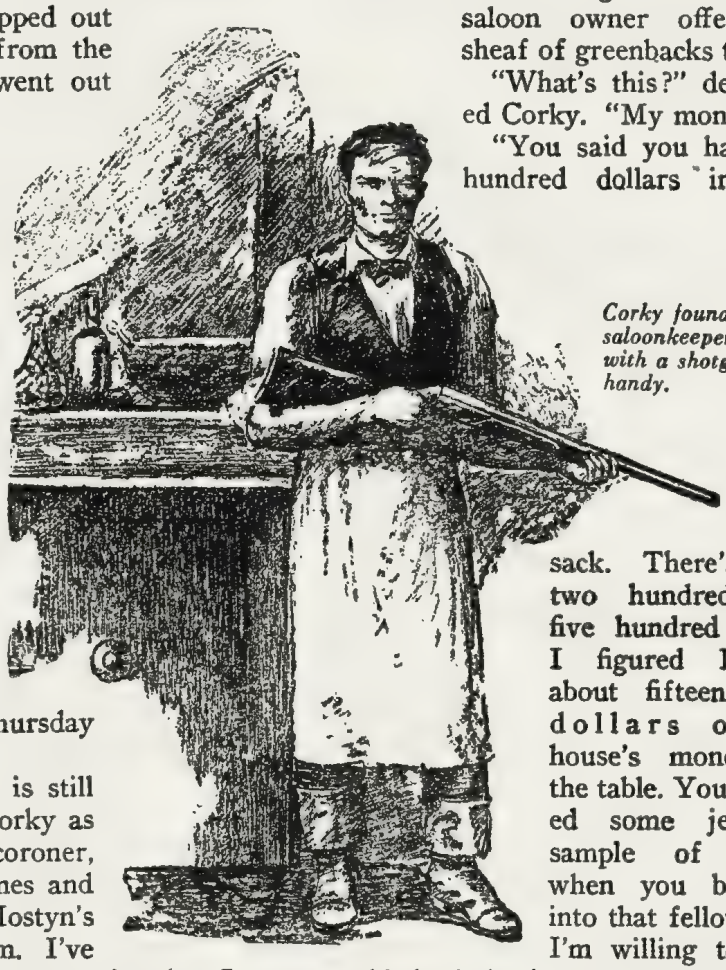
"Any time Thursday is still Thursday," muttered Corky as he hastened after the coroner, "and I want a few names and facts to place in Mostyn's hands when I meet him. I've gotta show him, and Gerry again, that I know what's to be done and how to do it. I don't want any more of this uncertainty and half-pay business. As soon as the inquest's over, I'll get my horses out of the livery and hightail it for the Harbin country."

The chance for action had come, and Corky was going to make the most of it. He quickened his step for The Bit and Spur. The dead outlaw's horse was still in front of the saloon. A fine looking black, he was being held by a youngster of fifteen who wanted to bask in the limelight till the sheriff came out. All the men were inside, probably for the same reason.

Corky found the saloonkeeper with a shotgun handy, standing by the safe at the end of the mirror, watching the crowd at the other end of the room by the icebox. He motioned to the ranger when he saw who it was. Arriving at the bar, the saloon owner offered a sheaf of greenbacks to him.

"What's this?" demanded Corky. "My money?"

"You said you had two hundred dollars in that sack. There's your two hundred and five hundred more. I figured I had about fifteen hundollars of the house's money on the table. You showed some jewelry-sample of nerve when you bumped into that fellow, and I'm willing to give you a third of the house money since if it hadn't been for you I'd 'a' lost all of it."



Corky found the saloonkeeper with a shotgun handy.

"Thanks. That's sure square of yuh," commented Corky who had not thought of that phase of the matter. "But, say, I've got enough on me for a few days. Just give me a receipt for this roll and stick it in the safe, will yuh?"

"Sure thing," answered the saloon man as he picked up a pad.

Giving the ranger his receipt, he set out a bottle of Harpers.

"Have one."

Corky was reaching for the bottle when in the big mirror he saw Scott, followed by Bronson and the coroner, separate from the crowd and start towards him. As it was logical for the coroner to want to question him, this might have seemed natural, had it not been for the manner in which the brand inspector fell in behind the sheriff, and the coroner behind the brand inspector, with the men slow in following.

Corky had a hunch that something was wrong, that he was in danger. His hand dropped from the bottle and he swung around with his back to the bar, puzzling as to whether the saloon man would remain neutral.

He hung his thumbs in his belt and hooked one heel over the foot-rail. With the proud confidence of youth he waited, shrewd, capable of an almost unbelievable swiftness of co-ordination of mind and sinew.

"Killrain, I'll have to place yuh under arrest for bein' implicated in the Burlington train robbery," announced Scott as he jerked out his six-shooter and came to a stop four feet from Corky. The ranger saw the twitch of the eyelash over the watery eyes, the corner of the upper lip lifted above the canine teeth. "Don't talk," added the sheriff, "or it'll be used against yuh."

"Where'd yuh get yuhr information?" softly queried Corky trying to think of what might have occurred, while he was after the coroner, to cause the sheriff to act this way.

"Yuh ain't so slick as yuh thought yuh was. This outlaw wasn't dead when yuh started for the coroner. 'Fore he cashed in, he said you was one of the leaders of the gang, and we're goin' to make sure——"

"Yeah, yuh're goin' to make *sure* I'm the goat—not if I can keep yuh from it! That's a lie about the bandit—a frame-up, and you know it, Scott. That man was dead, confound it, as dead as he ever would be——"

"Never mind yuhr talk," barked the sheriff. "Save that for the district attorney. Take his guns, Blackie."

There was a bit of doubt in Blackie's mind about the risk involved in this, even if there was a gun trained on the ranger, and he hesitated. The sheriff thumbed up the hammer of his .44 and then slowly let it down again.

Through narrowed eyes, Corky noted the hesitation on the part of Bronson, the thumbing of the gun-hammer, and decided the sheriff would rather have him in jail than dead. This was a frame-up Corky knew; what or why was a matter that would develop later. But he was sure the dead bandit had some connection with it.

He didn't want to kill the sheriff and he didn't want to go to jail. A man placed in jail on a frame-up had fewer chances of getting out than a man who was guilty. He must get to Harbin and see Mostyn and the sheriff of Pima County.

A floor board creaked as some man, nervous with the strain of the moment, shifted his position. Quicker than a rattler, Corky took his advantage.

"*You* take 'em, Scott; Blackie's goin' scared."

With the twist of a neck muscle, the sheriff flicked his head to see why Blackie had not done his bidding and in that split second Corky was onto him with the speed of a wolverine.

His head and shoulder caught the sheriff on the left side with such an impact as to jolt the sheriff off his feet and send him into Bronson with enough force to knock Bronson and the coroner onto the floor.

Before they were all in a heap and the sheriff's gun had stopped sliding, Corky had leaped for the door he had entered a few short moments ago, his right gun out, threatening the crowd. Back to the door, he opened it with his left hand and slipped the Yale latch. That would not delay them long; but every little bit would help him.

"If yuh want me, come and get me," he dared them, "but be careful who starts first and be sure yuh know what yuh're startin'. I'll be back."

With this taunt for the crowd, he waved his gun at the friendly saloon man,

slammed the door shut and whirled for the outlaw's horse. No one being in sight that he deemed dangerous, Corky sheathed his gun and grabbed the reins from the outstretched hands of the town kid, who, not being sure whether the rumpus inside meant that the dead bandit had come to life or not, was calling in a loud whisper, "Take him quick!"

Flinging onto the rearing horse, Corky tore away down the street past the coroner's house in a frenzy of speed. In the opposite direction, a scared kid was still running when the saloon door burst open and a few zealous souls rushed out to fire their revolvers at the echoing tattoo of thrumming hoofbeats. A mocking laugh came floating back to them.

CHAPTER IV

The Herd in the Night

BEYOND the first mile of thundering speed, Corky slowed up and stopped the black horse. He listened intently. Not hearing any signs of pursuit, he continued at a more reasonable pace. This was not the way he wanted to go, but it was all right for a start. He would follow this road till he came to a place where he could swing into the hills without leaving much evidence, and from there switch back to the west across the railroad track, heading for Bitter Creek Canyon on his way to Harbin.

There was no moon, and the stars afforded poor light for night traveling in a rough country. When daylight mantled the earth, he changed his course more to the west.

Sunshine faced the higher peaks, dropped to the lower reaches and still he pushed on, favoring the black horse as much as possible, praising the dead bandit's judgment of good horseflesh. Near ten o'clock he rode onto the top of an isolated butte for observation.

He knew the general slopes and watersheds of the entire region, but there were sections here and there he had never been in. He now judged himself to be five miles south of the lower ford on Bitter Creek.

He had lost more mileage during the night than he thought he had. He wanted to press on to maintain his lead, but his gallant horse needed a breathing spell.

Dropping off the butte, he entered a small park of high grass with an aspen-lined creek. Unleathering his horse, he hobbled him with a bridle rein and tied the lariat to the hobbles. Taking a big drink at the creek to ease his hunger, he then spread out his saddle blanket to dry in the sun.

Cleaning and reloading his gun as he rode.

"Boy," he spoke to the horse, "I sure got a lot o' business to see about, and I'm all powerful hungry, and I'm givin' yuh four hours to rest and eat. That's all I figure I can spare."

The black horse was losing no time. Finishing his roll in the sod and black loam, he was busy stowing away the tall bunch-grass. Picking out a sunny spot amongst the rocks, Corky sprawled his length and fell asleep.

Four hours later he was up and bringing his horse back for a rub-down, prior to saddling. Tightening his belt over that hollow feeling in his stomach, he forked the black and pulled for the ford on Bitter Creek, cleaning and reloading his gun as he rode along, watchful for any sign of a posse.

He avoided the small cabin and stables at the ford and crossed Bitter Creek lower down. He probably could have found food there and then continued in the westerly direction up the creek and over the pass to Harbin, but he did not want to run into any one.

He figured he could do without food till he reached Harbin. And by crossing the mountain farther north, he thought he could locate the stamping grounds and one or two of the Harbin rustlers.

"Ain't much use in gettin' there b'fore Thursday for Mostyn, and I sure would like to turn a rustler or two over to him. If I can connect up with Wedge Wilkins and take him in, I can probably save him from the noose if he'll talk. Can't understand why Sheriff Scott hasn't nabbed him long b'fore this."

Corky scanned the ridges and skylines for pursuing riders. Although he felt that Scott was just as apt to go into the mountains east of Sheridan with his hunt, where one of his posses was already, he intended to be on the lookout. However, he failed to see the rider on the buckskin horse which picked up his trail after he had crossed Bitter Creek.

Indian summer lay over the land and the afternoon air had the effect of a heady cocktail. Corky would have enjoyed the ride more had he not been engrossed with so many questions for which he could find no answer.

The grass on the rolling ridges, on the benchlands between the creeks, in the dry coulees and canyons, along with the aspen growth and evergreens for shelter, made a fine range. It also made a fine territory for the operations and hide-outs of rustlers or train robbers.

Skirting the tops of the higher ridges, he could see away in the north and west the Big Horn Mountains, the Wasatch Range merging into their forested slopes. The last ramparts were lost in a vague light. Below him the ranger could see several bunches of cattle and three bands of horses.

The last crimson dregs of sunset drained from the sky and the shades of night rolled down like curtains. Corky found himself in a rough country; so he decided to camp till morning.

He was on a creek that seemed to flow in circles and he wanted none of that in the night-time. He picketed his horse in a little glade and made a fire to warm him while he slept. He was quite sure no fire would be seen where he was holed.

With his back to a tree, he studied his problems in the fire while he smoked cigarets to allay his hunger. The fire burned down and he slept.

Two or three hours later he was roused. The sharp crackle of revolver shots was dying away as he wakened.

Another fusillade burst upon the night silence, and it appeared to Corky they came from down the creek. He slid into the timber and headed that way, careful of his guns as he tramped through the trees and underbrush. What kind of a battle was this?

Within a half mile, he heard the faint rattle of horns against horns and the softer sounds of many moving hoofs. With all that noise to drown his movements, Corky ran on as fast as he could pick his passage.

The brook he was following disappeared in the rocks and logs; beyond this he stopped in a clump of oak brush to watch and listen. There were the cursing of men and the attendant confusion of a herd being rushed along in darkness.

Corky could see a jumbled mass of moving bodies, but the bulk of the drive had already passed. The drags came by with one rider rope-ending them into a trot.

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed Corky. "Talk about luck! A rustled herd as sure as the devil! If I'd come a ways farther, I'd hit this pass and trail. Good thing I stopped when I did. I'll spend the rest of the night here to see if there's any

ridin' forth and back b'fore daylight. Whoopee!" he exulted silently. "If I can take in one of these birds for Mostyn, mebbe so he'll go back with me to see what Scott meant by tryin' to frame me."

He'd walk for warmth awhile; then sit and doze. The night wore on.

During one of these cat-naps, the ring of an iron shoe on rock roused him, and he could hear the *pud, pud* of a horse's feet on the trail. In the foggy light that precedes dawn, Corky made out a man on horseback, with another horse following.

"A sort of a rear-guard must be just trailin' in," fancied the ranger as he watched them disappear in the direction the herd had vanished.

Daylight was stemming in. A bird chirruped sleepily in the brush; at a distance a fox barked sharply.

All around lay the intangible; the elusiveness of the wilderness. Corky liked this. He was in his element.

The uncertainty, the mystery, ominous threats, the tang of danger! He was pitting his wits against those who made a business of pillaging the sturdy pioneer; against those who would drag him into the quicksands of dishonor.

"I'll get my horse and follow those buzzards," was his idea as he hurried back to where he had made his fire and picketed his horse. He found another thread in his web of baffilment. Horse and saddle were gone!

"Hell's bells!" ejaculated Corky. "What d'yuh know about that? That last guy was leadin' my horse—the horse of the dead bandit! Did that last guy recognize his chum's horse, or did he pick him up on general principles? If he laid here all night waitin' for me to show up, I wonder where he thought I went to? Couldn't wait any longer, so set me afoot to put a crimp in me.

"Thirty miles from Harbin and me as hungry as a snow-bound wolf. He must 'a' known how I like to walk, too. Damn him!" he swore aloud as he realized his predicament. He rolled a cigaret, and as he whiffed on this he calmed down, his lips curving with a little smile. Once more he began to talk to himself quietly, slowly, deliberately.

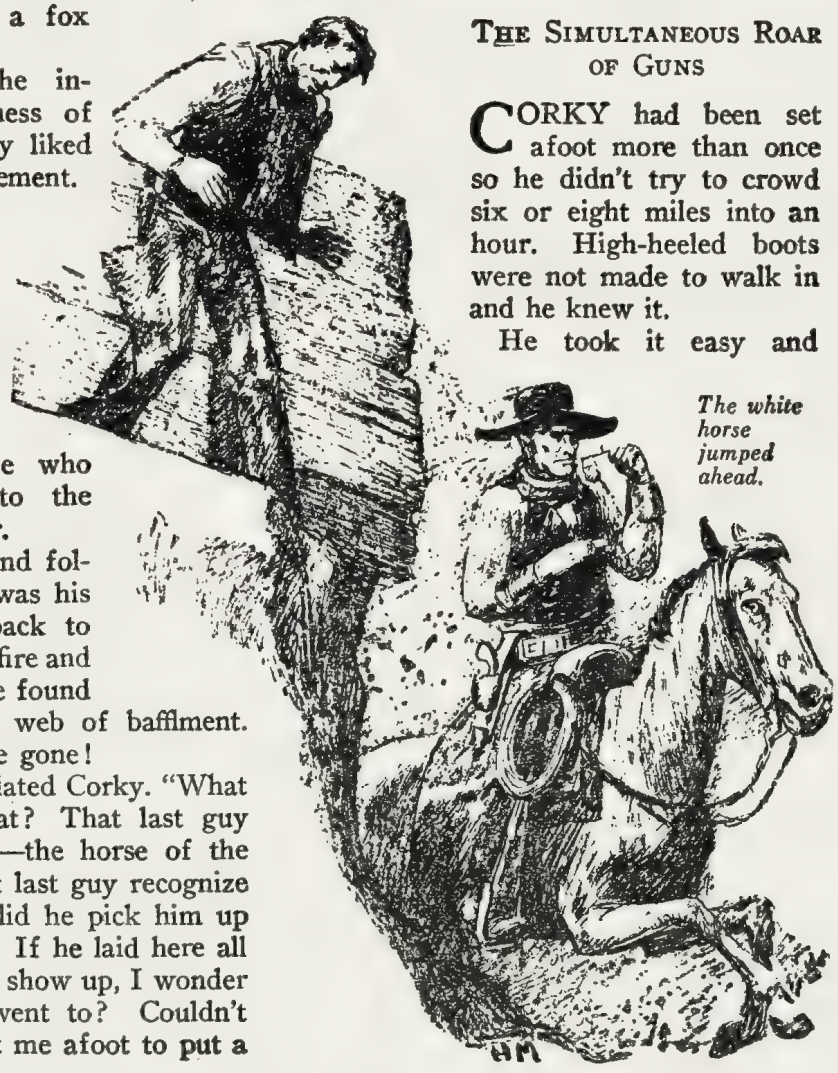
"That's another trick on me. Boy, if I can find their camp, I think this is goin' to be one perfect day." With this he turned and struck back to where the silent horseman with the led horse had followed the trail of the night-herd. He would follow him to his destination. Then the fun would surely begin.

CHAPTER V

The Simultaneous Roar of Guns

CORKY had been set afoot more than once so he didn't try to crowd six or eight miles into an hour. High-heeled boots were not made to walk in and he knew it.

He took it easy and



The white horse jumped ahead.

stopped frequently to sift the sky of early morning for smoke of a camp fire. Below him the sunken creek boiled up again. He went down and washed his face and had another big drink.

"Wow!" he muttered. "That's good water, but I'd like to see a little sow-belly, beans and coffee with sour-dough bread." Visions of good things to eat flitted through his mind as he stalked downstream.

Small coulees broke away from the creek. Many were choked with fallen timber, dogwood and buckbrush growing between the logs, and broken topped buttes that stood as grim sentinels above hidden valleys, determined to hold their secrets.

The hills closed in and the creek ran through a small gorge. The gorge widened again and Corky looked out upon a basin.

With all his knowledge of the country, he didn't remember having been in this neighborhood. But he had to admit that it had all the characteristics of rustlers' paradise.

Below him, where the rocks gave way to the brush and sod, was the sign of stock; a few horse tracks, many of cattle. If the man with Corky's horse was along the creek, he was not in sight.

Then the ranger saw the herd. Below the angle of the early sun, which was now drenching the western edge of the basin, nearly two hundred cattle were grazing.

"They never had that many last night," thought Corky.

From behind a tree appeared a cowpuncher on a white horse, riding towards the mouth of the canyon where Corky was standing. Beyond the herd, on the south side of the basin, up from a hidden cove, a thin string of smoke was climbing straight and trim into the sky.

When he looked again, a rider on a pinto horse was on the east side of the herd. The man on the white horse was coming steadily for the canyon.

Corky scuttled for a ledge overlooking the trail, a daring scheme in mind. If the white-horse rider started up the canyon, Corky would jump on him. That would save shooting and any trouble that might result from such a racket.

If the man didn't come into the canyon, stopping to stand guard outside. . . . Well, the ranger would have to scare him into surrendering without any shooting, if he could.

"Gee," acknowledged Corky, "these fellows sure ride good horses. I'll feel better if I can get that white baby between my legs."

The rider on the white horse evidently had business up the canyon, as he showed no signs of stopping.

"Wedge Wilkins!" Corky almost spoke the name aloud. "Luck's sure turnin' my way."

There was no mistaking the slim and well built man, of less than average height, with the humped shoulders and wedge-shaped face with the frog-eyes set close together. Wedge Wilkins, sure enough.

He wore chaps and had on an old dirty gray hat. One gun hung at his side and a rifle butt projected up from under his left leg.

"Hope that cayuse has sense enough to stop after the clinch," prayed Corky as he launched himself from the ledge.

He expected to land on him in such a way as to drag the man from the saddle and stay on top of him. Rather rough treatment, but Wedge could stand a lot of rough treatment.

The white horse caught sight of the leaping ranger and jumped ahead. This almost ruined Corky's calculations. Instead of catching Wedge the way he planned, his right arm barely caught the rustler's chin; but he was able to exert sufficient force to turn Wedge through a half somersault.

Corky landed on his left hand and knee, undamaged. He whirled, as he jumped to the expected tussle with Wilkins.

But no need. The man lay in an unnatural heap, eloquently quiet. Quickly Corky rolled him over, straightened him out, felt of his limbs, his head. Wedge was dead, his neck broken.

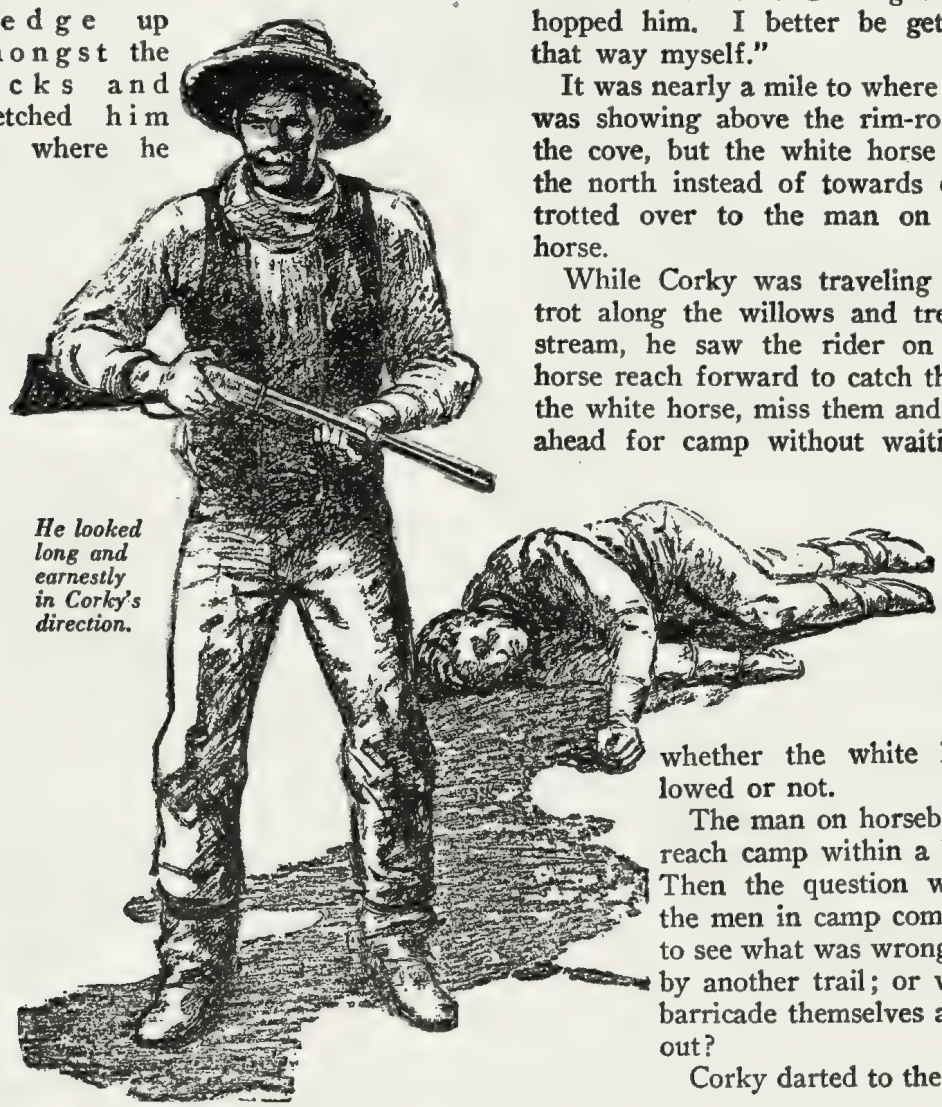
With hands that trembled slightly, Corky wiped his forehead. This was not

as he would have had it. There probably was no doubt but that the world was better off without Wilkins, yet there was a certain amount of unfairness, thought the ranger, in the manner of his death.

"I didn't mean to kill him now, but he's just as dead as if I'd tried to. And that damned horse went chasin' up the canyon."

In searching Wilkins, he found no papers of any kind, but he uncovered five twenty-dollar gold pieces and enough greenbacks to amount to another hunhundred dollars.

This Corky put in his own pocket, making a notation of the amount in a notebook. "That's about all he's got left after his last raid," was the ranger's conclusion as he carried Wedge up amongst the rocks and stretched him out where he could cover him with rocks for the time being.



He looked long and earnestly in Corky's direction.

A commotion up the trail caused Corky to peer over the boulder to see what the racket was. The white horse was coming back on a fast lope, reins flying!

The ranger could have leaped on the horse as he rushed by, yet he decided to wait to see who the riders were that had turned the horse back down the canyon. This was as good a place as any to give battle with a posse or any of the rustler gang.

Five, ten minutes, and no one came in sight. The white horse galloped down the slope and crossed the creek ere Corky realized that no one was coming.

"The darn fool—he only wanted to get back to the bunch and I might as well 'a' hopped him. I better be gettin' down that way myself."

It was nearly a mile to where the smoke was showing above the rim-rock around the cove, but the white horse swung to the north instead of towards camp, and trotted over to the man on the pinto horse.

While Corky was traveling at a dog-trot along the willows and trees by the stream, he saw the rider on the pinto horse reach forward to catch the reins of the white horse, miss them and then spur ahead for camp without waiting to see whether the white horse followed or not.

The man on horseback should reach camp within a brief time. Then the question was, would the men in camp come this way to see what was wrong and leave by another trail; or would they barricade themselves and fight it out?

Corky darted to the left, away

from the creek, and headed directly for the smoke. Through the oak and small clumps of aspen he hurried, hoping that by cutting down the distance, he would cut the advantage of the man on the horse in their race for camp.

The sweat was running down his legs into his boots to make blisters on his heels, and his heart was ringing bells in his ears, when Corky reached a bluff overlooking the rustlers' camp. He flung himself into a patch of rabbit brush at the edge of the sandstone cliff to regain his wind and to watch proceedings in the cove.

One swift survey of the horseshoe cove or pocket was enough to give him a map of the two or three acres. The horseshoe lay east and west, with the heels west and the creek making a bar between them.

Beyond the creek was a box-canyon, where several saddle horses were grazing. Corky was at the toe or front of the shoe; below, to his left, were large cottonwood trees shading a store house and the cabin from whose fireplace the smoke was issuing.

There were the running gears of a wagon, and a woodpile, near the center. To his right was a cleft of a box-canyon, holding the stable and corral with a fence across the mouth of the cleft.

Between this cleft and the creek was a fish-fin ridge. A camp that was much in use, decided the ranger. He saw nothing of the black horse he had ridden the day before.

The man on the pinto from the herd dashed out of the shrubbery and trees in the cleft and came to a sliding stop at the bars in the fence across the opening.

He let down the bars, decided not to take his horse, and went on a run for the cabin, the winded pinto following with head held to one side to avoid stepping on the reins.

The bluff on which Corky rested was nearly a hundred feet above the floor of the cove; not so very far in an air line to the cabins but not near enough to command attention with a six-gun if action started.

No sooner was the rider of the pinto out of sight than Corky ducked and dodged along the rim till he found a place to get down.

"Mebbe so I can get to the stable b'fore they can get any horses there and get 'em saddled," was the ranger's line of thought as he plunged into a precipitous coulee which looked as if it would lead him onto the flat in the willows near the barn.

He reached the log barn. Still there was no outbreak from the cabin. Corky listened. He thought he heard voices, high-pitched and angry, but he could distinguish no words, since the sounds were muffled by distance, the cabin walls, and by a pounding in his ears resulting from his run.

He crawled through a window into the barn, the better to peer at the cabin, and hastily glanced at the rigging hung on the walls about him. There were two saddles, two or three sets of harness, a few sacks, a grain barrel and two or three bales of hay.

"Two saddles here," counted Corky. "One on pinto, one on white horse—that might mean four men. One done for up the trail—that means three in the house now, likely as not. What gets me is where that horse is that I was usin' yesterday and that was taken from my camp this mornin'. I gotta play my cards close to my belt and take some of these fellows alive so they can talk."

He was squinting out between the logs, trying to see in the window of the cabin-end facing the barn, when there came a burst of profanity, the cabin door was flung open and the puncher who had ridden the pinto horse backed out of the door.

Corky could see that he was but a lad who had joined the wild bunch with the idea that he would lead a romantic life. The illusion was being shattered this day. He had lost a companion in a mysterious manner and now someone was forcing him into a game for which he was unprepared.

He turned and started to run. But before he had taken five steps, a bald-headed man appeared in the doorway and stepped outside, a long-barreled pistol in his hand.

"Just as I thought," Corky assured himself with a little feeling of justification. "Baldy Allison! I had an idea him and Wedge was runnin' together. But what's he up to now?"

Baldy was a big, burly man. His head was egg-shaped, little end down for a chin, with ears and nose having the appearance of being stuck on the sloping sides of his head. He was a gunman who had pulled off several shady deals, but had so far managed to escape the penalties. Right now he was executing a trick; a trick as old as the hills, yet aways new—baiting a man before killing him.

"C'mon back yere, Curley, and fight it out!" he called to the boy who was bound for the pinto. "Drag yuhr gun and shoot it out. I'll give yuh a better show than yuh did Wedge!"

"He's framin' the kid to kill him," protested Corky inwardly as he leaped for the barn door to get outside for better action.

Timed with his jump, almost a continuation of his own shot, there came another report and he knew he had waited too long. Before he could wrench open the door, two more shots rang out.

He cleared the threshold in time to see the pinto horse angling off towards the creek. Curley was sagging down, left arm outflung, right hand clenched on holstered gun-handle. Baldy's gun was whipping up in the direction of Corky, a string of smoke stretching from its barrel.

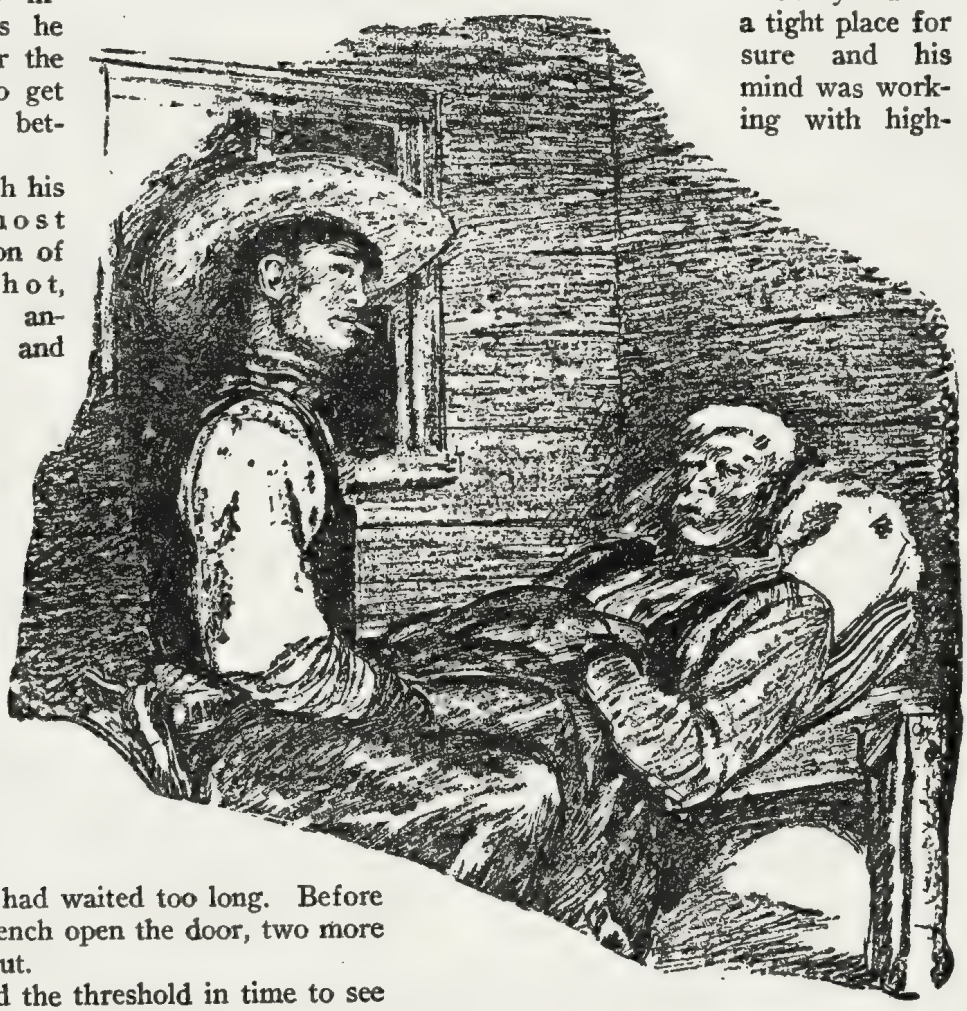
Their guns roared in the same instant, Corky crooking his trigger-finger as his feet hit the ground from his stable jump. His boot heel caught in a piece of looped bailing-wire and he fell sidewise just as the savage *bu-u-whang* of a .45-.70 rifle crashed from the doorway of the cabin.

CHAPTER VI

Nearly a Confession

FOR the moment Corky had forgotten that he had figured on another man in the house. This man had entered the game with a rifle in his hand.

Corky was in a tight place for sure and his mind was working with high-



"There's whisky in the grub-box—gimme a shot."

pressure rapidity as he struck the ground. If he jumped up to run for the stable, the rifleman could plug him before he had scrambled to his feet. If he lay quietly, the rifleman might shoot him once or twice more to be sure he was dead, before coming up to him, and yet he might not do this since Corky had fallen as both six-gun and rifle had been fired at him.

He felt that the bailing wire had saved him for a purpose, and that his best plan was to play dead. When he hit the ground he collapsed and quivered himself into a position with his head facing the cabin, his left arm doubled under him, right arm outflung, with cocked gun gripped in apparently lifeless fingers.

He had evidently downed Baldy with one of this two shots, since he could see that worthy squirming on the ground. That was pure luck, Corky admitted, since the distance was too great to expect accurate shooting with a revolver.

In less than a minute, through his half-shut eyes, Corky could see the rifleman edge out of the doorway, rifle held ready for quick shooting. He looked long and earnestly in Corky's direction; then back to his companion. Then he raised his rifle and fired once at Baldy.

Corky almost shouted in horror at the cold-blooded hellishness of the deed. Things must have been on the brink of treacherous rupture to put men in such a mood that they were so eager to live up to the ruthless slogan, "Dead men tell no tales."

The rifleman, a stranger to Corky, coolly levered another shell into the barrel and walked over to where Baldy lay. He prodded Baldy with his foot to make sure he was dead; then walked over and looked down at Curley.

Satisfied that Curley was done for, the rifleman calmly shifted the rifle to the crook of his arm and started for Corky.

During these short maneuvers, the ranger absorbed the fact that he must plan to kill or be killed. He determined to shoot and shoot to kill as soon as the rifleman was in reasonable range. He couldn't afford to take any chances with this perverted savage.

Corky prayed that the outlaw did not shoot before he could. The man's black hat was set lightly on the rusty-brown shock of hair, and he walked with a springy step despite his size and heavy weight. He was past middle age and his face was cruel.

Sixty feet, fifty, forty! Corky dared not wait longer. The killer would see through his scheme. Corky tipped up his gun barrel and fired at the man's middle, just above his belt; thumbed back the hammer and shot again, leaping to his feet the second after.

Scuttling for the stable, he dodged behind the corner, just ahead of the sullen *spat! spe-e-w-e-e!* of two rifle bullets. The first tore into the roof poles, sending down a shower of dirt. The second spun away into the air with a waspish whine.

"He's shootin' high," muttered Corky as he shoved out the four empty shells and rammed in fresh loads.

Dropping to the ground he peered between the projecting corner logs. The man was down, rifle to one side, out of his reach. He raised himself on his arms and coughed, spitting forth a red spume. Putting his weight on his left arm, he tried to draw his revolver, but the effort was too much and he dropped on his face.

Corky waited a few minutes to satisfy himself that there was no movement in or near the cabin. Then, with .45 ready in his hand, he zigzagged warily in his run to the stricken outlaw.

Corky pulled the man's Colt from the scabbard and kicked the rifle farther away before sheathing his own gun. The man's eyelids lifted as he rolled him over. The square chin and full lips beneath the short heavy mustache, together with the well formed nose, did not prepare one for the ice-cake eyes of blue green. Corky had the impression the eyes did not belong to the man on the ground.

"No use lookin'," granted the wounded one. "Yuh got me in th' lungs an' belly. I took yuh t' be dead. Never missed a man at that distance. Yuh out-foxed me an' done good shootin'. Take m' gun—take m' gun an' finish me." His face was chalky. "Finish me like I finished the

other wolf," he added steadily. "I can't get away an' money's no good where they'll put me now."

"I'll put you on yuhr bunk," offered Corky. "Mebbe I can fix yuh so you will be easier." He picked up his own hat from where it had rolled when he fell, jammed it on, and lifted the wounded outlaw. There was another man around who had taken Corky's horse, and as he carried the man to the cabin, Corky couldn't help but wonder if he were being watched from the rim-rock.

With his burden, he entered the cabin door which was still open. To the left, near the window which looked out upon the barn, was a table with dirty dishes and a lamp. Ahead was a fireplace.

The far end to his right had bunks on three sides, two deep, and in this three-sided rectangle was another table, holding a lamp and cards. Kicking his way through the chairs and benches, Corky placed the limp figure on the lower center bunk and searched it for artillery. The man was breathing in jerks; his eyes were closed.

The ranger freshened the fire and looked for water. The bucket was empty. On his way to the creek he paused at Baldy and Curley.

Curley was shot in the side and back. His gun never left the scabbard. Corky did not know him.

Baldy's head was torn open by the rifle ball. "Served you right, yuh hellion, for shootin' the kid in the back," observed Corky as he searched him. He found more gold and bills on both men, but no papers.

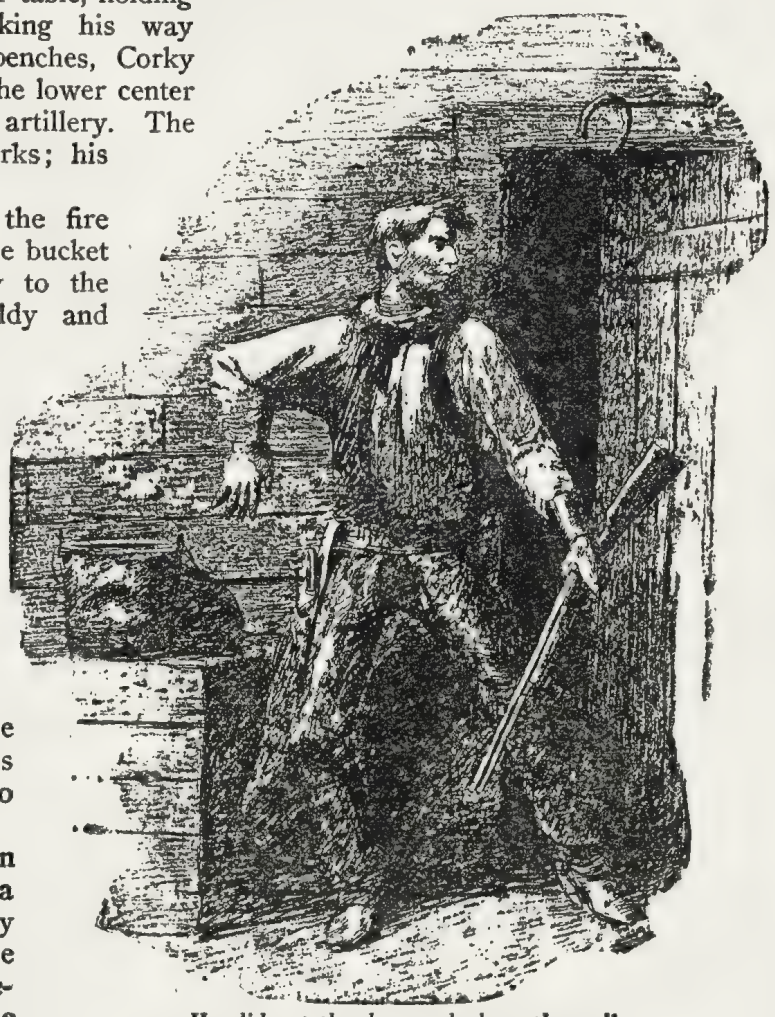
He put the money in with Wedge's and made a notation of it. On his way back from the creek, he took in the rifle and revolvers. He would hide the men as soon as he attended the wounded one.

Having washed the wounds, he was bandaging them with an old shirt and strips of blanket when the rustler-bandit regained consciousness. When he was completely bandaged and lying back, Corky rolled and gave him a cigaret and made one for himself. Touching match to them, Corky pinched out the flame and looked down upon the wastrel.

"Yuh're hard hit hombre, if yuh wanta know it. Yuh won't last long. Anything yuh wanta say b'fore yuh cash in?"

The baleful eyes stared up at him, smoke drifting from the cold-blue lips as he countered:

"Who th' hell're *you* t' be askin' *me* questions?"



He slid out the door and along the wall.

"Yuh mean what's my name and where'd I come from, or d'yuh mean yuh know who I am but wanta know where I get my authority to question yuh?"

"Oh, I know who yuh are now. But I didn't when yuh was out there on th' groun', or I'd put two-three more bullets into yuh b'fore I went up t' yuh. Yuh're a Association man, but since when did th' Association get t' meddlin' in train——"

The outlaw never finished the word. He knew he had made a big mistake. There was rustled stock near camp and that was reason enough for the Association man to be prowling around.

There had been no call for saying anything about trains. He eyed the ranger sharply. Had he caught on?

A wild wave of exultation rushed over Corky, but his poker face displayed no emotion. If he played his cards right, he might have irrefutable evidence to show Mostyn that the Harbin rustlers had robbed the Burlington also.

The fact that Sheriff Scott had accused him of being one of the train robbers, he now tried to turn to his advantage. Looking steadily at the eye boring into his, he said:

"Yuh right. Yuh might as well finish it. 'Train robbers.' The Association don't meddle with train hold-ups, but to show you how I'm mixed in it, I'll tell you this." Corky took a long shot in his line of reasoning, assuming that the dead bandit in The Bit and Spur was one of this gang. "Two of your crowd held up The Bit and Spur in Sheridan Monday night. The sheriff killed one of 'em. I went for the coroner and when I gets back, the sheriff claims that b'fore the robber died, he said I was one of the gang that robbed the Burlington. Then the sheriff deputizes the brand inspector and they start to arrest me. I knocked 'em for a row of pins and made my getaway on the dead man's horse. I think Scott called him Pig Diehl, an ex-deputy of his. I don't know if Scott has a posse trailin' me or not."

Whether this shot struck home or not, Corky couldn't tell. A flicker of light, or at least a change of bleakness, flashed across the icy eyes so swiftly that he wasn't sure that he saw it.

"Yuh're a liar—yuh're tryin' t' get me t' squeal! That's why I killed that skunk, Baldy. He was framin' to double cross me an' I knowed he'd squeal the firs' time he got in a jam. I—th' gang's been gettin' techy, afraid of the ol' double-cross. We was makin' too much money rustlin'. . . ."

He lay quietly for a moment, hard eyes staring straight ahead. Then he spoke again:

"Who showed yuh the way in here? Wedge? Where's Wedge?"

Not waiting for an answer, he turned his head toward the window facing the creek.

"There's whisky in the grub-box—gimme a shot." He wiped the blood from his lips onto the back of his sleeve.

Corky found the whisky and, rinsing out a cup, gave the bandit a cup full of the liquor. He drank it as one would water. Corky helped himself to a small drink before setting the jug by the bed. The bandit seemed stronger, but didn't pursue his line of thought.

"Was yuh afraid Wedge would double cross yuh?" suggested the ranger.

"Get th' hell outa yere an' let me kick in b'fore I lose m' nerve an' snitch," was the growled response, almost cut short by a fit of coughing.

"Suit yuhrself," returned Corky, deliberating a moment before he walked away, trying to conjecture how much the old bear knew and who he was. Corky had never run across him at all in his range work.

"He sure could tell me a lot if he only would," mused the ranger. "And I gave *him* something to think about on top of what he knows.

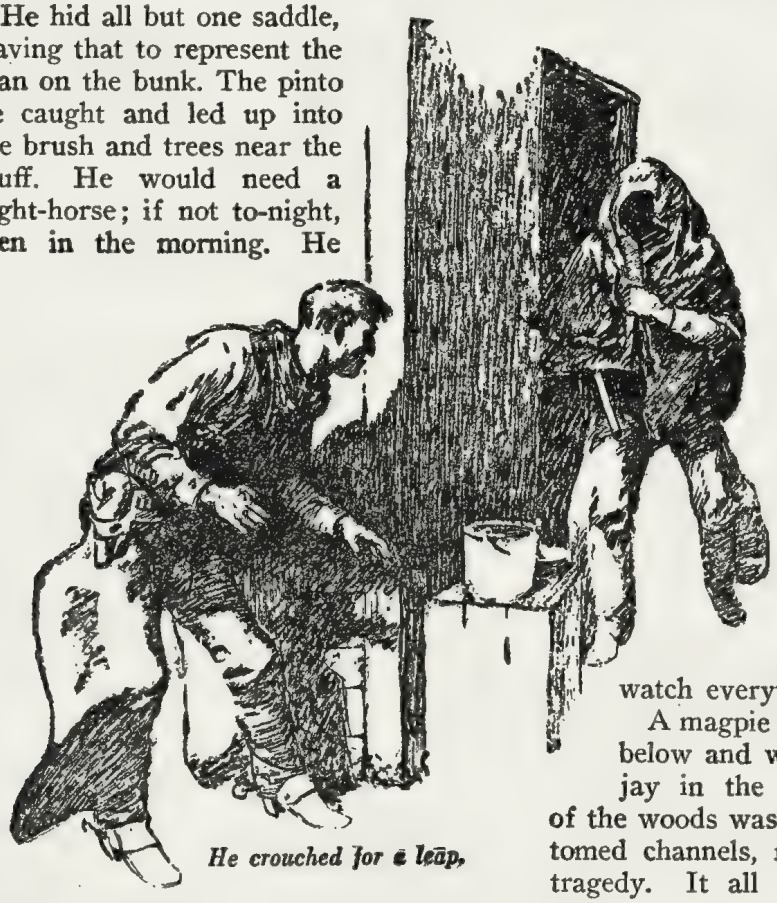
"And he didn't say anything about Pig Diehl," remembered Corky as he wolfed down all the beans, sour-dough bread and coffee he found at the side of the fireplace. "Where's this thing goin' to end and what was the sheriff's idea in tryin' to arrest me?"

He had not a few irritating questions to perplex him, yet he felt a great deal better after what he had eaten.

Going outside, he was surprised to see that it was now noon. He disliked his task, but it had to be done; so he set to work swiftly.

"If there's any more men comin' in, I might as well fool 'em as long as I can," he thought, while dragging Baldy and Curley to the far side of the cabin. He covered them with grain sacks from the barn.

He hid all but one saddle, leaving that to represent the man on the bunk. The pinto he caught and led up into the brush and trees near the bluff. He would need a night-horse; if not to-night, then in the morning. He couldn't understand why the man who had taken his horse had not put in an appearance.



He crouched for a leap.

"Mebbe he's gone for more of the gang. I wisht I knew how many there is. It looks as if I won't meet Mostyn by to-morruh night if they keep stringin' in, or if the sheriff and his posse come along and Scott still has that wild idea. I ain't worryin', though. I'll get the straight of it."

He put the yard in order and went into the house, going over to the rustler.

"Yuhr conscience bother yuh yet?"

The eyes, now mere pencil points of refracted light, flashed up to him. "No," was the tired but definite response.

"I'm goin' up the creek and won't be back for a couple hours. Anything yuh want?"

He did not answer at once, but finally: "Go t' hell!"

"*You're* on the road," cheerfully accorded Corky, "and traveling fast." The bandit followed him with a twist of the head, words on his tongue clamoring to be spilled.

"I got the old wolf t h i n k i n'," gloated Corky as he picked out a rifle and ammunition, hid the rest of the guns, and then made his way to the top of the sandstone bluff from which he had first viewed the cove. "He may have something to say to-night."

Somewhere back in the b a s i n a steer bawled, g i v i n g the ranger the idea that the herd was probably gone. Well, he couldn't watch everything.

A magpie squawked in the willows below and was answered by a blue-jay in the cottonwoods. The life of the woods was moving along its accustomed channels, regardless of man-made tragedy. It all seemed so useless, this rustling, thieving and sudden death.

He was well hidden and he thought he had a good chance to control the cove with the rifle if anything occurred during daylight.

But the loss of sleep the last two nights was a big item. The sun shone warm on the rim-rock and being a young healthy animal, Corky's head soon was bobbing.

CHAPTER VII

A Revelation

SHADOWS were in the cove and the sun was large and round in the west when Corky wakened with a start. He

grabbed his rifle and looked. A quick survey of the cabin, the horses across the creek and the outbuildings divulged nothing new.

"Nobody in yet, looks like. Guess it's up to me to stand guard on this layout to-night. Good thing I snoozed. If nothin' breaks loose to-night, it's me for Harbin to-morruh." He started down.

He never saw a cowcamp in his life that ever had any wood chopped ahead of time for cooking. This rustlers' roost was no different in that respect.

He had to chop wood to renew his fire in the fireplace. With half closed, expressionless eyes, the outlaw watched Corky prepare their evening meal. If any vain regret or bitter thought assailed him, the nearness of death did not break his iron control.

He refused to eat anything the ranger had prepared, other than a bowl of oatmeal gruel. On top of this, he drank another cup of whisky. Corky raised up from placing the jug on the floor, and found the outlaw's piercing eyes fastened on him.

"Yuh said Scott killed Pig Diehl. Baldy said *you* done it. How come?" The words came slowly as he plucked a raveling with his left forefinger and thumb.

Corky didn't answer immediately. What was the outlaw's game? Was Baldy there or was the man using Baldy's name because Baldy was dead? Evidently the man on the bunk thought a lot of Pig the way he was interested in the affair of the saloon.

"No, I didn't kill Pig. Get that straight. Though I don't see as it'd make any difference, since he died tryin' to pull off a hold-up. But he could 'a' been put in jail instead of bein' killed. I laid him out with a clout on the jaw, and when I grabbed him, he was limp as a fresh-skinned hide. I pulled my gun and fired once at Baldy—if Baldy was the man by the door—but the sheriff got excited and killed Pig while he was on the floor——"

"And Pig said you was one of the gang!" broke in the outlaw feverishly. "And the sheriff shot Pig? Th' double-crossin' polecat."

"No," corrected Corky. "Pig didn't say it. Pig was dead when I started for the coroner. It was after we got back that the sheriff tried to double cross me by saying Pig said I was one of the gang when I knew Pig was dead. Why Scott wanted to work such a scheme——"

"And the sheriff gunned him! The dirty double-crossin'——" The bandit coughed. He wracked himself till the blood stood on his lips. The ranger wiped it off and gave him more whisky. The man attempted a laugh which ended in a sardonic gurgle. He said more.

"Pig dead, Curley dead, Baldy dead, all by double-crossin' guns! Double—guns double-crossed! Hah! I hope th' rest get th' same. Where's Wedge? Wedge was sore this mornin' 'cause he had t' go on herd after bein'. . . . Say, lemme tell yuh, kid. Nothin' to it. . . ."

He stumbled on, as if he had a tale to tell but did not want to tell more than his queer code allowed. He rested, eyes closed; then, he again looked at the ranger.

"We was sittin' pretty. But no, Pig, Wedge an' Baldy had t' rustle more—more beef. Then they got th' crazy idea t' hold up Th' Bit an' Spur after they'd picked up a bunch. Wedge stayed on herd—Baldy an' Pig done th' stick-up part. Pig never come. Baldy an' Wedge brought in th' herd, pickin' up more along. Wedge was sore t' Baldy—sore about goin'. Where's Wedge? Did he squeal?"

"If I tell yuh where Wedge is, will yuh come clean?" asked Corky. "Was it you, or Baldy or Wedge set me afoot this mornin'?"

There came the sounds of a slight commotion out near the stable. Corky sidled over and peeked out the window next to the barn. Cattle were on the bedding ground in the box-canyon and a few steers were already past the bars.

"Holy damn!" muttered Corky. "Somebody's bringin' in the herd. Never expected that now. I gotta get into the woods before I'm trapped in here."

He jammed on his hat and picked up a grimy dish-cloth on his way back to the rustler.

"One of the gang's comin' in and I gota keep yuh from yappin' till I kinda get the hang of things." He pulled a gun cord from his pocket to tie the man's hands.

"Tie m' hands an' tap me on th' head with a gun—if yuh want—but don't put that thing in—m' mouth. I cain't breathe much—as 'tis."

"What's the answer to my last question?" hurriedly asked Corky.

"Ne'er min', kid," came the whisper. "Mebbe yuh'll get yuhr answer now. Go on. I won't blab on yuh."

Corky hesitated for a second, then dropped the towel on a chair-back. "Go to it," he told the wounded one. "I guess yuh can't hurt me muchly anyway."

He picked up the rifle and slid out the door and along the wall to the far end of the cabin next to the cottonwoods. He scuttled into the darkness of the brush and headed for the creek.

Dashing across the opening along the water to the rocky point of land between the stream and the stable, he hid in the rubble and boulders.

From here he could watch all points of approach to the cabin and could reach the house quickly if necessary. The steers were commencing to lie down, their outlines blurring with the oncoming tide of darkness.

One hour, two, and no rider. If Wedge, Baldy or the man on the bunk had set Corky afoot that morning they were all accounted for. Who, then, had brought the herd in?

Corky couldn't get it. Whoever it was, he must have known something was wrong and was now nosing around in the dark.

Wisps of cloud occasionally trailed across the bent sliver of a new moon, alternating its bright light on the clearing with drifting shadows.

Then came the trail noise of a hurrying horse, and a man rode out from the bluff behind Corky.

"That's another one!" judged Corky as the man came to a stop near the cabin. A steer lumbered out of the way, but the night rider evinced no spoken surprise. He dismounted and the ranger moved forward to learn when he entered the cabin.

The man stopped at the door and Corky crept to the woodpile, silently cursing a steer that snorted and backed off. The stock in the yard might indicate that someone had forgotten to put up the bars, but the new arrival hesitated. It was a bit early for all lights to be out in a camp of this kind with a crew of such hard-bitten riders.

There was the soft slip of leather as the man drew his gun from his holster and slowly opened the door. Stepping inside, he left the door half open.

Corky circled out and came back by the window facing the creek. No noise inside . . . then the flare of a match . . . more light as the lamp on the shelf was set aflame.

"My God!" exclaimed Corky under his breath. "Sheriff Scott! In with the rustlers. And he shot Pig Diehl for fear Pig would squeal! The sheriff was the one the man in the bunk meant when he called him a 'double-crossin' polecat.' I see a lot! But what's he goin' to do now?"

The thin face, the watery eyes and the roan hair all combined to show a desperate man. Scott held the lamp with his left hand. His gun was in his right hand, ready to shoot. Mystification was written largely on the thin features as he glanced around.

Corky ducked; then he glued an eye to a crack. Scott moved slowly at first. Then in a few swift strides he reached the table by the beds, set the lamp down and jumped for the wall by the last bunk. Nothing happened. Then Scott saw the bulk of the bandit in bed. He sidled over that way. Grabbing the lamp in his left hand, he held it so he could see the rustler's face. Corky was on the verge of speaking when Scott laughed.

"So yuh got to fightin' amongst yuhrselves, eh, Toughie? Where's the rest of 'em?" Then, filled with fear at what his own question brought to his mind, he set the lamp on a chair and put his gun in its holster.

Grabbing a boot-jack from the floor, he

knocked up the center board of the table and thrust in his hand below the other edge of the top. The table was an ordinary wooden one, loosely put together, the sides giving no indication that there was any cavity below the upper surface. The whole thing was so rickety that no one would ever suspect it as being the hiding place of treasure; yet the sheriff pulled forth two bundles the size of two loaves of bread, wrapped in heavy canvas.

"Ha-ha!" he gloated. "Yuh boys didn't find it, didja? Been playin' cards on it every night." He swung around so he could look at the rustler. "After I shot Pig, I knew things was goin' to bust. I made a deputy outa Bronson and tried to make a goat of that Association man, but he got away from us. I'd been here sooner, only I couldn't get away from Bronson and the posse we organized. If Bronson gets away from the posse and comes in here before yuh die, take him to hell with yuh. Adios, Toughie! Me for Canady."

Shifting the bundles up under his left arm, he started out.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

THREE steps the sheriff made. Corky was preparing to meet him, when he saw the sheriff stiffen in his stride, draw his gun and fire.

Corky had heard a disturbance at the end of the cabin near the door, but he was so absorbed in the new developments of the scene in the cabin, that he merely set the noise down as caused by a moving steer. He straightened by the wall as an answering shot tailed on to the end of Scott's followed by a second report from the same gun.

Corky calmly stared in the window. He saw it was Bronson, the brand inspector. He was not surprised; he was getting accustomed this day to revelations of human greed and folly.

The sheriff was down under the table near the wall bunks, with Bronson standing at the other end of the room near the fireplace, crouched, gun pointing at the silent sheriff. The brand inspector's black suit was soiled and crumpled. His snake-black eyes were glittering; his thin lips were drawn to a mere gash. Hate burst from him, bathing his words in vitriol.

"Get up and fight, you double-crosser! You double-crossed the people who made you sheriff, you double-crossed the gang, and now you try to double-cross me. Thought I couldn't get rid of that posse! Rise up, you gutless hellcat and take your medicine! How many of the gang did you kill? Wait till I tell the people you robbed the train and how I tracked you down!"

The sheriff didn't move; Blackie did not wait longer. He moved cautiously forward, eye flicking over the room, watchful of a trap.

Seeing this, Corky dropped to the ground. Leaving his rifle, he crept to the door. Raising to his feet, he pulled out his forty-fives and peered inside.

Blackie was almost above the sheriff. Thinking that he might kill the sheriff in the way Toughie had killed Baldy, Corky did not wait. Stepping over the threshold he called sharply and distinctly: "Shed yuhr guns, Blackie, and hands up!"

Blackie whirled and fired, the ball spattering against the fireplace next to Corky's hip. Corky's two guns belched rapier-tongued flame, the precision of his shots showing in Blackie's half-circular lurch as the two slugs hit him, but didn't knock him down. Blackie fired twice more, but his shots went wild. A third slung tore into his chest, and he staggered down in a heap near the sheriff.

Corky sheathed his left gun and stepped forward. Stooping over to examine Blackie he felt a bear-trap hug around his ankles.

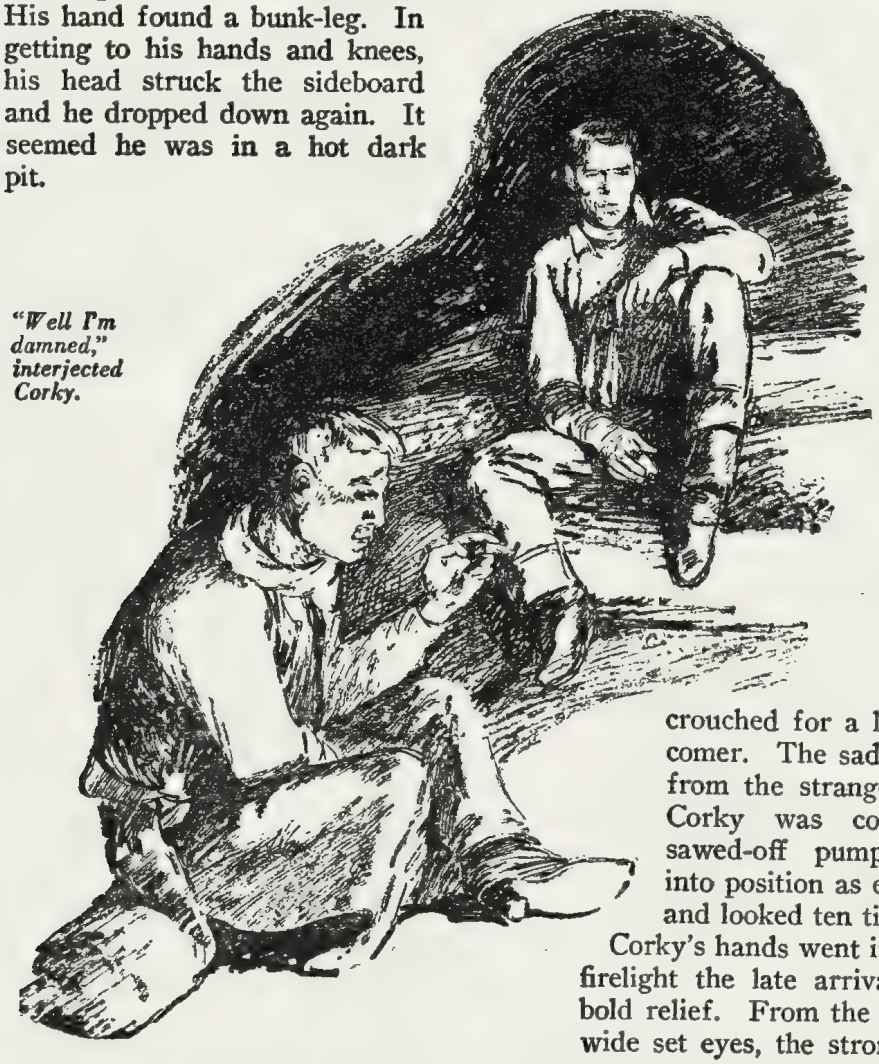
The sheriff! Half pivoting at his hips, Corky brought the gun in his right hand down in a sweeping arc. The barrel struck the table edge and the gun was knocked from his grasp. His feet were lifted, and floundering to catch his balance, he bumped the table over. He clawed for his other gun as he went to the floor, but only managed to grab one of the sheriff's boots.

The sheriff struggled to raise himself. His hand, dropping Corky's ankles, came in touch with a gun. As he turned to use it, Corky gave a twist and caught the sheriff's belt.

His legs freed, Corky gave a violent jerk, but it brought his chin on top of the sheriff's head with such force that it made him dizzy. Before he could recover from this, there was a blinding flash in front of his face, another jolt walloped him and Corky thought he was falling from a cliff.

Up from below, he caught the smell of burning oil, mingling with the sweetishly acrid odor of powder. Two sharp reports like firecrackers; then the boom of a giant cracker that rocked the walls.

Semi-consciously, Corky was trying to climb up, but he was bewildered. His hand found a bunk-leg. In getting to his hands and knees, his head struck the sideboard and he dropped down again. It seemed he was in a hot dark pit.



"Well I'm damned," interjected Corky.

Corky slipped from darkness into sunlight. His head throbbed and an egg-lump was over his left eye.

What he considered to be the sun was a big fire. On looking closer, he saw that the cabin was a seething furnace. Restless cattle were bawling back in the box-canyon.

Recollection came flooding over him. He remembered the men in the shack and wondered how it was that he was outside. He jumped to his feet.

Beneath the cottonwoods near him were two outstretched forms. This proved to be Blackie and Scott, both dead, with the two rolls of plunder between them.

Corky couldn't see how he or they had arrived there. Then he remembered the man who must have brought the herd in at dark. Where was he now, and where was the man in the bunk?

Corky started on a run for the cabin. Could not let the fellow die in his bunk that way! As he neared the door, a man came from around the corner next the wood-pile, a navajo blanket over his shoulders.

"That's him," guessed Corky. He reached for his guns. Both holsters were empty. He crouched for a leap onto the newcomer. The saddle blanket slipped from the stranger's shoulders and Corky was confronted with a sawed-off pumpgun that flipped into position as easily as a revolver and looked ten times as deadly.

Corky's hands went into the air. In the firelight the late arrival's face shone in bold relief. From the high forehead, the wide set eyes, the strongly chiseled nose,

the well moulded mouth above the firm chin, Corky could read the traits of one who would understand erring humanity. The lips were now curved in a brief smile as the soft voice drawled:

"Easy, son. What's your rush to get back in the cabin after I just finished packing you out a few minutes ago? I kept your guns till you knew who I was. I'm Mostyn, just from Milk River, sent down here by Gerry of the Association. Are you——"

"Fine," almost shouted Corky in his relief at having reliable help. Lowering his hands, he asked, "Did yuh get the man on the bunk?"

"I carried you out, then Sheriff Scott and the two bundles he had dropped when he went down the last time. Then I brought out Bronson, the brand inspector. I——"

Corky waited to hear no more. He grabbed the navajo from Mostyn's heels. Throwing it as a shield about his head and shoulders, he plunged into the flaming cabin.

The dry pine boards of bunk and floor, table and benches, wall-logs and roof-slabs, made the best kind of firewood. The cabin probably was used only as a summer camp, and the sides at the floor had not been banked with dirt. This free air passage from underneath caused a big draft and the cabin at the bunk end was burning furiously, with the blaze fast reaching towards the door.

There was not much smoke, but the heat was terrific. The log walls would stand for awhile but the flimsy roof was apt to fall any time. Corky doubted if the rustler was alive, but he would like to be sure about it.

Two-thirds of the way to the bunk, he stumbled against a blazing chair and almost fell over Toughie's body. The heat had driven the man to make one grand effort to escape from being burned alive. Corky picked the rustler up, the extra effort seeming to set his lungs on fire.

Small flames were bursting from their clothes as they reached the door. Outside, the cool night air was a waterfall of relief. Mostyn soon choked the blaze of shirts and trousers. Corky gently placed his burden on the saddle blanket under the big cottonwood and stooped to examine him.

"He's about the last of the gang," affirmed Mostyn. "See if he can tell us how to give back this money—if it's all here. I'll get it."

Corky went for a hatful of water as Mostyn brought the two bundles over. When the ranger returned, Mostyn was getting to his feet from the outspread canvas. No money lay scattered there! There was nothing but washers, bolts, rocks, paper and pieces of sacking!

Corky caught the idea in a flash. Evidently Scott and Bronson were not the only ones who knew where the money had been hidden. Some of the gang had found it and had left this trash as a blind!

If the dying rustler did not tell them where it was, if he knew, it might be lost forever. If he didn't know where it was, it would be an almost impossible task to locate it. Corky dropped to one knee and propped Toughie against the other one, letting water from the hat dribble into the man's mouth and down his chin and chest.

"The money, Toughie! The money! Where—who got it? That was trash the sheriff pulled from the table!"

Toughie had the vitality of a bear; but even that has an end. The cold water on his chest probably revived him as much as the water down his throat. He brightened. Death of his pals had released him from his determination not to squeal on them while they were alive.

"Goin' fast now. Gotta talk." He groaned feebly, then. "Yuh're a square-shooter, kid. It took nerve t' pack me outa them flames. No need—only I c'n tell yuh th' gang's wiped out . . . if yuh got Wedge. Seven. . . . Did yuh ketch Wedge?" The bloodshot eyes looked up at Corky. "If he's dead I'll feel better. He was m' boy—gone wrong like his dad."

"Yes," replied Corky softly. "He passed out easy—not torn up. Who's got the money from the train hold-up? That was only trash Scott took outa the table."

The outlaw was quiet for some time. Corky wiped the blood from his lips.

"I'm glad," said Toughie. Then he remembered. "Th' money—sixty thousand—t' be divided seven ways. Scott an' Bronson, respectable men, leaders of th' Harbin rustlers—then turnin' their hands t' trains."

He attempted a laugh, but it ended in a spasm of pain.

Corky gave him more water. The outlaw continued, but in a weaker voice. His mind seemed keen, but the flesh was failing.

"Atter th' train hold-up, Scott an' Bronson hides th' money. Said we'd divide later. They'd not much time that day here, or I guess they'd 'a' hid it better. They was gettin' uppity. Was sendin' word t' the Association you was crooked—" Corky choked a gasp as a light broke on him—"thought yuh knowed too much—wanted yuh removed. I tol' 'em if they got tangled with th' 'Ssociation they'd go bust—wanted 'em t' split th' swag so we could scatter an' get out.

"I'm glad I'm goin', kid—trailin' with th' wild bunch — always on th' dodge. Men like Scott an' Bronson an' Baldy. All double-crossers! Baldy an' me found th' money an' put th' trash in th' table. He wanted half, allowin' me an' Wedge the other half. I couldn't see 't that way. He planned t' get me, but you give me th' chanct t' get him first. Double-crossers all. . . . I had th' money under th' floor b'neath m' bunk."

He shivered at a crash and turned his head to see the sparks from the fallen roof go shooting towards the stars.

He saw Mostyn for the first time, but this aroused no interest. Looking up at Corky, he grinned slightly as if he read what was in the other's mind.

"Don't worry none, kid—she won't burn. I got 'er wrapped in a salty ol' navajo—all th' express money. Dinero from rustled stock done us no good. Gang's wiped out. Five outa—outa th' seven killed by double-crossin' guns—guns of the double cross. Tha's all, kid. . . ."

The final words came in a whisper as if the strength failed in proportion to the accomplishment of his purpose, and he was gone.

Corky let the dead outlaw back on the saddle blanket and stepped over to the side of Mostyn. A falling board from the roof reminded him of the two dead men on the other side of the cabin. He told Mostyn as he started that way.

"I took them into the brush," called Mostyn, adding, as Corky walked back: "I was returning from doing that when you ran into me at the cabin corner. I had found them earlier in the evening when I was prowling around."

"I guess that's about all, then," returned Corky as he stood watching the flames gut the cabin, "until mornin' when we can look for the express money in the saddle blanket." He fashioned a smoke and set it afire from a spark which dropped at his feet.

"About all," supplemented Mostyn as he turned and clasped Corky's hand, "except that Gerry and I owe you an apology. I'm giving you mine now, or any time. Let's go over and sit on the woodpile while I tell you how I happened to come down this way."

Seated on a log, with a cigaret burning, Mostyn smiled as he glanced at Corky.

"It turned out all right, but Gerry was surely worried. Scott and Bronson kept sending in word that you were crooked and that the Association should take you out of this country. They knew enough about the Harbin rustling to make it look nasty for you. They were merely putting you in their own shoes. Gerry had great faith in you, but since you would naturally work to a certain extent with the sheriff and brand inspector, and they were the ones making all these complaints, he just kept waiting till I could get down this way to investigate.

"I was in Sheridan when you received the wire to meet me in Harbin. I was to follow you over there and see what I could learn.

"When you raced away from the saloon Monday night, I thought you would pull for Harbin, so I waited for you at the

ford on Bitter Creek. I knew you'd have to be along there somewhere. Was a bit surprised when you struck farther north. I watched the herd last night come through the pass, the same as you. But when you were not back at camp by daylight, I jumped to the conclusion that you had joined the herd and really might be one of the rustlers. So I picked up your horse—the outlaw's horse, you know, which could mean several things——"

"Well, I'm damned," interjected Corky with a chuckle. "I thought all along it was one of the rustlers." He told Mostyn about coming on afoot, his surprising Wedge, his race with the pinto and the fighting in the cove. "Yuh know I been lookin' all day for the fellow who picked up my horse to be comin' in."

"I don't doubt it," laughed Mostyn. "You've had a busy day. I got into the basin in time to see a herd come out of this box-canyon to join the new bunch. The man on the pinto was out quite awhile ahead of the man on the white horse. The white horse is in with the cattle now. When he came back with empty saddle this morning, and the pinto rider never returned, I didn't know what was up."

Watching the lean bronzed face beside him closely, Mostyn continued:

"Since my job was mostly to watch you, I felt safe in staying up where I could watch the canyon and keep all those brands from straying out till we had checked them. I had the sheriff of Pima posted in the gap west of here. In case you come through before Thursday, he was to trail you to see if you intended to report at Harbin; if neither one of us made an appearance, he was to come and look us up, although I'm thinking it would have taken him a long time to locate this cove. But as it is, everything is all right and Gerry will be glad to get my report. You will get all your back pay and an increase in salary and all the credit for this clean-up," finished Mostyn.

Corky was puffing on a fresh cigaret. He let his gaze rove over the sandstone bluffs circling the cove. In the lurid light from the flaming cabin, they were as red as the blood that had been shed this day.

He remembered the old outlaw's words about the double cross, or lack of faith. Lack of faith often caused men to do strange things. He couldn't blame Gerry, though; and the men that brought it all on had paid the supreme penalty. He looked up at Mostyn with one of his rare smiles:

"Thanks. That's mighty white of yuh, but I don't care so much about the money as I do to know that Gerry will have his old confidence in me."

"He will when he gets my report, and to show you my faith in you, I'll stay here after we get the money out of the ashes, and you will take the money into Harbin. I'll give you a note to the sheriff of Pima, in the pass, to let you by and for him to come in here. You can find your way down this creek on to the Harbin trail, or if you can find another way out, go to it. How's that?"

For answer, he received a wide smile from Corky to show he was content.

RESULTS OF THE CONTEST IN THE MAY, 1927, ISSUE OF "COWBOY STORIES"

We take pleasure in announcing that: The winner of the First Prize, of $75.00, is Major G. W. Lillie (Pawnee Bill), for Part One of his cowboy serial novel, "The Man From Medicine Lodge"; the winner of the Second Prize, of $50.00, is J. Edward Leithead, for his book-length cowboy novel, "The Wrangler of the Rockin' Y"; and the winner of the Third Prize, of $25.00, is J. M. Watkins, for his story, "Trigger Farnwell." In addition to what he was originally paid for his manuscript, each of these authors has had mailed to him a check for the amount of the prize he won.

She got him so wrought up he clawed his beard.

THE MAN FROM MEDICINE LODGE

A FIVE-PART COWBOY SERIAL NOVEL

By Major G. W. Lillie (Pawnee Bill)

Illustrated by H. MELOY

PART FOUR

Read in the opening paragraphs the complete details of what has happened, and go on with the story.

ARCHIE BENDER, cowboy from Medicine Bend, Kansas, runs into a nest of six-gun trouble on Oklahoma range. Employed by Bill Hawthorne, who owns the Bar O Bar Ranch, and known as a "killer" because he saved Nevada Hawthorne, Bill's step-daughter, by shooting two men who had held her up, he is accused of the murder of Gridley, Nevada's brother and her only real friend. Nevada had not stopped to see who it was who saved her; but when Archie has the chance to speak to her for the first time, he tells her that for some reason he loves her, and that she will some day love him. This enrages Nevada because she can do nothing about it; morever, she almost believes him. But the death of her brother changes everything for her, even possibilities. Marshal Stilson had arrested Bender and put him in the Red Ridge jail. Nevada gets Stilson's keys and releases Bender when she learns that the Bar O Bar punchers are going to lynch him for Gridley's death. She swears that Bender shall die for the murder, but at the hands of the law. Nevada makes Stilson swear her in as a deputy marshal.

Pow-wow, one of the Bar O Bar cowboys, and Bender's only friend on the place, manages to help Bender escape when Nevada frees him from the jail. He tells Bender that the only man from whom they can expect any help is Colonel Jim Byrd, owner of the Three Circles Ranch. Byrd and Hawthorne have for a long time been carrying on a feud. Colonel Jim decides to help them, when his ranch house is attacked by the Bar O Bar punchers. The Three Circles cowboys fight back because the Bar O Bar has come across an agreed dead line. Just before the attack opened in earnest, Nevada had burst into the Three Circles ranch house and arrested Bender. She releases him so that he can fight, but says that she will capture him later. Byrd arranges that Bender and Pow-wow shall work for him by helping with driving his cattle over the old Sac and Fox Trail to Arkansas City. Kickapoo

Charlie, Byrd's trail-boss, is told about Bender and Pow-wow. Spike Cooligan, Dusty Moses and Overland Mike Blumm are some of the other cowboys under Kickapoo Charlie.

Zatt, Powder River Tilghman and Griz McCune, three members of the notorious Dangerfield Gang, try to stop the drive, but the herd is stampeded through them by Kickapoo Charlie and Bender. Later on, just as a twister is about to bear down on them, Bender sees Nevada come over a rise of ground. Although he did not know it, Nevada had come after him for a reason that he could not suspect. He tried to get to her in time to save her, but he could not make it. Pow-wow, however, was able to get to her in time to shield her from the worst of the blow. The storm nearly knocked out Bender, but it did knock out Nevada for a few minutes. She was taken to the Boxed Q Ranch where she had friends.

Unknown to Bender, Nevada had come after him to tell him that Stilson had proved that Bender was not the murderer of Gridley. And so he goes on to Arkansas City with the herd, which is rounded up after the storm. He does not go into town, however, until later on when a boy comes out to tell him that Pow-wow has got in a fight and is dying and wants Bender. When he gets to the place the boy takes him to, he finds that Powder River Tilghman and three others of the Dangerfield Gang have set a trap for him. He shoots his way out of it in one of the greatest fights known in the history of the West.

When he gets back to camp, one of the Dangerfield Gang, who had been shot, was picked up by Kickapoo Charlie's herders, and who is now dying, wants to see Bender. He tells Bender that the Dangerfield Gang is planning to dynamite the bank at Red Ridge that Friday night. Before Bender can ask him for more particulars, the man dies. Pow-wow, drunk as he can be, then rides into camp with the news that Nevada with a posse is after Bender. He manages to get Pow-wow on a horse, and they ride away just as the posse comes into view.

CHAPTER XIX

Kickapoo Charlie Turns Traitor

THE only distinct recollection Nevada had of the tornado was of the terrifying screech that accompanied it. Never had she seen such an exhibition of remorseless power; never had she been made to feel so small and insignificant. Consciousness fled as she and Pow-wow were swept off their feet, and for awhile she remembered nothing more.

When she came around, the rain was beating into her face in sheets. She had to hold her head down to get her breath. Her clothing was sopping, her hair plastered to her face in a streaming mat. She was surprised, moreover, to find herself seated on the back of a horse with a pair of sturdy brown arms, presumably belonging to some one seated behind her, holding her in the saddle.

For a second she imagined the arms were Bender's and, as she began to wiggle experimentally, was both disappointed and relieved to hear the soft drawl of a stranger, admonishing her to be quiet and offering such explanations as Dusty thought would tend to make her so. After that, as she essayed no reply, the embarrassed puncher closed up like a clam, and the rest of the ride was made in silence.

A heavy rain had fallen in the vicinity of the Boxed Q, but had exacted little toll. The tornado had not come within several miles of the house. When the cluster of frame buildings finally came in sight, the miserable girl could not repress a sigh of relief. Betty Dunne, a homely little thing, with a heart almost as big as her body, greeted her effusively, as was her wont, crying out in horror when she learned what Nevada had just been through.

While changing into some of Betty's ill-fitting but dry garments in the privacy of her friend's room, Nevada related her story in full. A thousand excited interruptions made the telling of it difficult, but she continued doggedly till she got it all out. Betty crooned and exclaimed over her and cuddled her in her arms. They then gave way to tears, cried a little

on each other's shoulders, dried each other's eyes, agreed that but for men the world would be a pleasant place to live in, and descended to the porch, where Nevada was greeted by Betty's widowed father.

Dunne was a portly old gentleman with a red face and a belligerent aspect. He gesticulated when he talked and punctuated each of his statements with an oath. As, however, despite his sixty-odd years, he still had an eye for a pretty face and a trim ankle, and was very fond of Nevada besides, he gave his daughter's guest a hearty welcome.

Later in the evening, after supper, he sat on the porch and listened to her repeat her story. In the middle of it, he stopped her and told her frankly he believed she was raving, and, after admitting he liked to hear her do it, begged her to continue. Proceeding to the end, she got him so wrought up he clawed his beard, made strange noises in his throat and, had he not been restrained, would have armed himself with a double-barrel shotgun and ridden away from the ranch to what end he either could not or would not say.

In the morning it was Nevada who had to be persuaded to stay. Dunne, his reason restored, reversed the order of the previous evening, and told her flatly that she should not stir a step away from the ranch for at least a week. If necessary, he declared, he would tie her down and sit on her.

Against her wishes, she remained. Although, as she had informed Dusty before his departure, she had sustained no physical hurt, she had received a bad shock, and knew she needed time to recover from it. She felt, however, that her duty to Bender was greater than her duty to herself, and had Dunne not behaved in such a high-handed manner and brushed her objections and arguments aside as he would have brushed aside a swarm of flies, she would have gone on at once,

At the end of a couple of days she began to feel fit again. A conference was then called. All who participated in it were unanimous in declaring their belief that Bender had left the herd and run for it. Just where he had run to was another question, but one which, it was thought, some of Colonel Jim's drovers could answer if they could be persuaded to do so. When, therefore, Nevada presently rebelled and refused longer to remain inactive, Dunne, accompanied by his foreman and several riders, went with her to visit the trail outfit.

Correctly assuming that the herd had already reached Arkansas City, Dunne took the main road to town and, reaching there at night, stopped long enough to make certain inquiries of the town marshal and to hear from his lips of the battle that had been fought in The Dagger a few hours earlier.

The marshal, it appeared, having received Bender's note in due course, had just come from the blind-tiger, where, with several deputies, he had cleaned up the few details Bender had not had time to attend to. As he was naturally desirous of holding converse with the "shootin' fool," as he dubbed Bender, he annexed himself to Nevada's party and rode with them out to the outfit's camp.

The location of the camp was, of course, not known, but they knew it must be somewhere on the Sac and Fox Trail near the city. Thanks to Pow-wow's ribaldry, the camp was easily found. The identity of the singer was suspected by none of them; was, in fact, known to none of them but Nevada, and she had seen the Irishman but little. But Dunne, acting on a hunch, headed for the melodious outpouring, which was heard soon after they hit the old cattle trail, and, while it gradually receded as they advanced, and they seemed unable to draw any nearer to it, it eventually brought them within sight of the campfire.

Kickapoo Charlie was standing by the fire rolling a cigarette when they rode up. He looked them over indifferently. Dunne, partially obscured by Nevada, he did not see till the rancher pushed past the girl and rode into the firelight. Then:

"Danged my whiskers," he exclaimed, cordially, "if it ain't that old wildcat from the Boxed Q."

"Death!" ejaculated his old boss, star-

ing. "It's Kickapoo Charlie. Howdy, Charlie! If I'd 'a' known I war gonna meet yuh, blamed if I wouldn't have stayed home. What yuh doin' in Kansas?"

"Trail-herdin' some cows for Colonel Jim," replied the trail-boss with cheerful mien. "Light an' set."

"Wal," drawled Dunne, good-naturedly, "Jim never did cyare much who he put in charge uh his affairs, but I never thought he'd git so cyareless as tuh give yuh a hand in 'em. How's the old cuss, anyhow? Mean as ever?"

"Meaner," declared Kickapoo Charlie.

They both laughed. They were old friends, and like many of their kind, delighted in bantering each other. Kickapoo Charlie slanted a glance at Nevada.

"What yuh doin' in these parts, Boss?" he queried. "Looks like yuh mought be herdin' a posse."

"I'm lookin' for a bolt uh lightnin' cyalled Bender," asserted the rancher truthfully. "Whar is he?"

"Quien sabe?" said Kickapoo Charlie affably. "In Mexico, mebbe. Leastways, that war whar he headed for, an' if he ain't thar, it ain't his fault. He war shore plumb anxious tuh git these hostile United States behind him."

"When'd he light a shuck?" interposed the marshal, carelessly.

"About a week ago," said Kickapoo Charlie, walking unsuspectingly into the other's trap.

"Oh," cried Nevada, "but he couldn't have. The marshal says he was in Arkansas City only a few hours ago. If you know where he is, please tell us. He is no longer wanted by the Baxter authorities; he has been proved innocent."

Kickapoo, about to take a puff on his cigarette, paused, with the paper cylinder poised within an inch of its objective. He stared at her.

"I beg yuhr pardon, Ma'am," he said, doubtfully, "but would yuh be so kindly as tuh say that over again? I'm gettin' sorter hard uh hearin' in my declinin' years."

"I said that Bender is no longer wanted by the authorities," she said. "Marshal Stilson has proved him innocent of the—the crime he was supposed to have committed."

"How-come yuh tuh be lookin' for him with a marshal's star on yuhr shirt, then?" he demanded.

"I wish to tell him so," she retorted.

Kickapoo Charlie flipped the ashes from his cigarette. He regarded the glowing tip reflectively.

"Yeah?" he drawled. "Wal, blamed if I ain't learnin' a heap uh things tuh-night, shore 'nuff. This is a bang-up surprise party. Yep, it shore is. Air yuh givin' it tuh me straight, Ma'am, or air yuh tryin' tuh inwiggle me intuh sayin' things about Bender I hadn't oughter?"

"Do you mean tuh insinuate that the lady's a liar?" put in the marshal fiercely.

Kickapoo Charlie caressed the butt of Bender's gun.

"Shet up, yuh," he snapped. "I ain't talkin' tuh yuh, feller, an' I ain't insinuatin'. When I got a thing tuh say, I say it. If I'm doubtin' the liddy's word, it's because I doubt everybody's word when a friend's life's at stake. *Sabe?"* He squinted his good eye at the marshal. "I reckon yuh come out tuh help convey the good news tuh Ben, too," he sneered.

"Not me," was the marshal's emphatic denial. "I'm honin' for tuh make a little conversation with him on the subject uh some gents he salivated in town tuh-night. Yuh're a hard gent tuh understand—yuhr lingo is plumb puzzlin'. What I'm tryin' tuh figger out is, how-come this gun-wizard war in town an hour or so ago if he went tuh Mexico last week?"

"'Tis kinder mysterious, ain't it?" grinned Kickapoo Charlie. "War yuh aimin' tuh arrest Bender?"

"I war not," disclaimed the marshal. "I war aimin' tuh congratulate him. Whatfor would I want tuh arrest him? I shore would like tuh talk with somebody in this outfit that's got some sense. I don't admire a liar whatever. If yuh didn't look like a half-wit, I'd take yuh in on suspicion of aidin' a fugitive. Ain't the boss around yere anywhar?"

"He shore is," responded Kickapoo Charlie modestly. "He's now debatin' whether tuh salivate yuh or tell yuh the

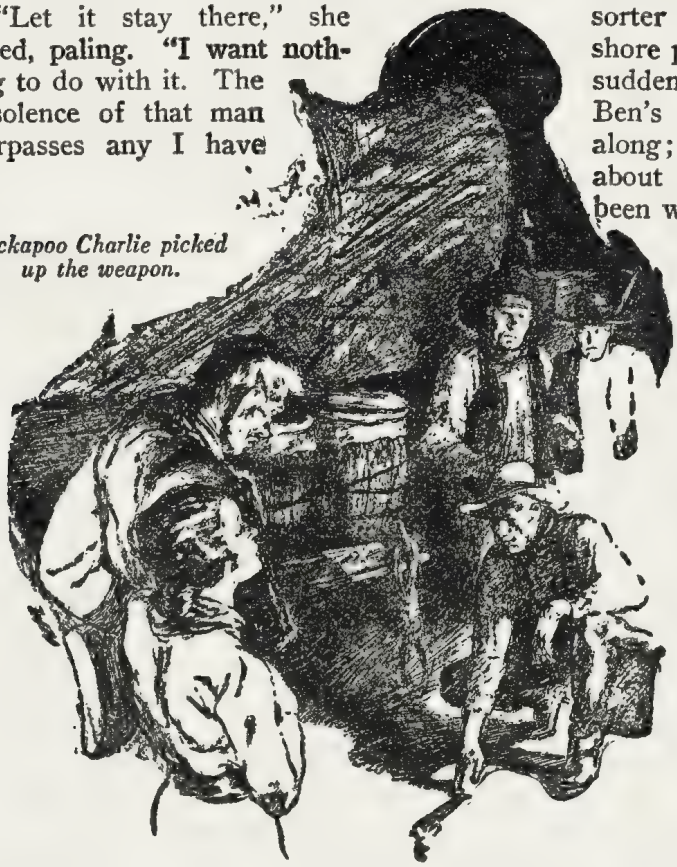
truth. Me, I like stars about as well as anybody, but I don't like the kind that's got *Marshal* printed on them whatever; and of all the hombres I ever saw wear that kind, I admire yuh less'n any."

Giving the marshal no time to reply, he smirked at Nevada, and, after reversing it, held out the gun Bender had left in his care.

"Ma'am," he went on politely, "I ain't shore whether I cyan tell yuh whar Bender is or not, but I cyan give yuh a message from him, anyhow. Before he went away, he gave me this weapon an' asked me tuh present it tuh yuh with his compliments in case yuh should come sashayin' around lookin' for him. I turn it over tuh yuh, Ma'am, with gen-u-wine pleasure."

He thrust the gun into her hand before she could withdraw it. She jerked her hand away as her fingers came in contact with the notches, and dropped it, as she might have dropped a red-hot brick. The gun thudded on the ground. Kickapoo Charlie started to recover it.

"Let it stay there," she cried, paling. "I want nothing to do with it. The insolence of that man surpasses any I have ever known. He makes me regret that I have inconvenienced myself to such an extent on his account. That gun. . . ." She set her little teeth. "Hand it to me!" she commanded, peremptorily. "I will return it to him."



Kickapoo Charlie picked up the weapon.

Kickapoo Charlie picked up the weapon and gave it back to her. He studied her expression.

"Do yuh aim tuh return the gun or jest its contents?" he queried.

"Perhaps both," she returned curtly. "Are you going to tell us where Bender is or not?"

Kickapoo Charlie took off his tattered hat and scratched his head. Obviously, he did not know what to do. If Bender had really been exonerated, he should be so informed without delay; if, on the other hand, the girl was juggling with the truth in order to entrap him, and he, Kickapoo Charlie, told her where the puncher was, the harm he would do his friend might be irreparable. The problem was a tough one.

"Ma'am," he said, perplexedly, "I'm a sorter slow thinkin' man, an' yuh've shore put this thing up tuh me plumb sudden. It ain't no news tuh hear that Ben's innocent; I've known that all along; but I haven't heard nothin' about th' charges against him havin' been withdrawn. Nope, nary a word, Ma'am; an' while I don't like tuh cast no aspersions on a liddy's word thataway, Archie Bender's my friend, an' I gotta proceed cautious. If he gits locked up or salivated because uh that rotten business back at th' Bar O Bar, which he didn't have no hand in, I'll be parboiled an' stewed if it's gonna be because uh me."

"Bender's friends seem to be almost as numerous as his enemies," she observed tartly. "It's a pity he doesn't deserve the one as much as he does the other. I can assure you that we have told you nothing but the truth. Bender has been cleared of the charge that made

a fugitive of him, and is now free to come and go as he likes." She looked away. "If I," she added, in a hard little voice, "have personal differences to settle with him, I shall at least do nothing to endanger his freedom."

It was that last that decided him. It was plain to him that, at that moment, she was more interested in their personal relations than in anything else, and he was a shrewd-enough judge of human nature to know that that would not be the case if she believed Bender had murdered her brother. He turned to Dusty and Billy, who were standing behind him drinking in the conversation, their mouths agape.

"Saddle Slats for me, Dusty," he ordered sharply, "an' don't let no weeds grow under yuhr hoofs doin' it nuther. I'm goin' after Ben. Yuh an' the others breeze home in the mornin'. No more licker—an' I ain't foolin'. *Sabe?* Yuh better! Scat!"

Dusty, a little unsteadily, it is true, but none the less obediently, hurried away to do his bidding. Billy, paralyzed with embarrassment by a glance from the girl, zig-zagged after him.

"Where *is* Bender?" queried Dunne, impatiently. "Since it has finally percolated through yuhr thick skull that we're on the level, why not tell us an' git the misery over with? Whar's he at? We're only wastin' time settin' yere listenin' tuh yuhr fool talk."

"Don't listen, then," chuckled Kickapoo Charlie, in rare good humor over Bender's change of luck. "Listen tuh somethin' more interestin' an' musical. If yuh strain yuhr years a heap, yuh cyan hear somethin' that sounds like fourteen screech-owls singin' the Star Spangled Banner. Hark!"

Setting an example, he leaned his ear to the wind, and the others, both impressed and puzzled by his manner, did likewise. Their puzzlement grew. Bender and Pow-wow were now far away, and while distance did not exactly lend enchantment to the Irishman's voice, it cut down the volume of it tremendously. It could still be heard, but only faintly.

"I hear a coyote barkin'," said the marshal, doubtfully; "but thar ain't nothin' remarkable about that. I been hearin' one ever since I've been yere."

He looked hard at Kickapoo Charlie. The trail-boss grinned.

"That ain't no coyote," he chuckled, overlooking the slur; "that's an Irishman tornado by the name uh Pow-wow singin' a love song. An' whar yuh find Pow-wow, yuh're purty apt tuh find Ben. Them hombres air so close in each other's affections, twins an' sardines air miles apart beside them."

"Why," exclaimed Nevada, "I heard that man singing here in camp as we rode up. Do you mean to say that Bender just left her a few minutes ago, just before we came up?"

"That's *exactly* what I mean," admitted Kickapoo Charlie. "He allowed he war goin' tuh Red Ridge tuh rob a bank, but if we ride real hard—— Gee! Is the liddy goin' sommers?"

Nevada was. She brought her quirt down on Roan's rump while the trail-boss was still talking, and was off like the wind. Grumbling at her haste, Dunne spurred after her, with his riders strung out behind. Kickapoo Charlie swarmed up on the back of the pony Dusty and Billy led up.

"Wal," drawled the marshal, "I reckon I'll light a shuck for town. I'm already outer my jurisdiction an' only come outer it because I wanted tuh pronounce the *bene*diction." He guffawed. "S'long, Charlie. If I ever see yuh again, which I don't hanker tuh do whatever, I shore hope yuh air wanted for murder or somethin', so I cyan shoot yuh, which I'm sure honin' to do."

"Same tuh yuh, Marshal," rejoined the trail-boss, without rancor. "That'll give me a chance tuh take yuh apart an' see whar the Lord made a mistake when he put yuh tuhgither. See yuh again sometime or other."

"God forbid," muttered the marshal, and rode off.

Chuckling, Kickapoo Charlie turned his pony and dashed away in the opposite direction, to catch up with Nevada and Dunne.

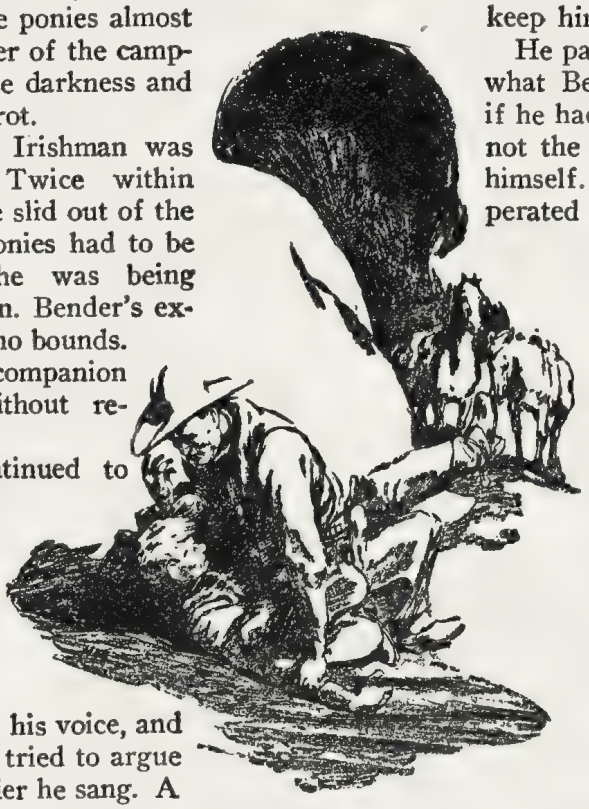
CHAPTER XX

A Bath for Two

BENDER was in something of a quandary. At the very outset, he perceived that he would never be able to outdistance Nevada unless something was done to Pow-wow. The Irishman was about as drunk as it is possible for any man to get without losing consciousness completely, and was becoming unmanageable. As Bender was forced to use both hands to hold him in the saddle, it became necessary to pull in the ponies almost before the glimmer of the campfire was lost in the darkness and to proceed at a trot.

Even then the Irishman was hard to hold. Twice within fifteen minutes he slid out of the saddle and the ponies had to be stopped while he was being hoisted back again. Bender's exasperation knew no bounds. He swore at his companion roundly, but without result.

Pow-wow continued to sing at the top of his voice, and the more Bender tried to argue with him the louder he sang. A man stone deaf in both ears could have followed him through the darkness with ease, and Bender knew that Nevada and her followers would have no trouble in doing so. As matters now stood, they would be overtaken before they could go ten miles.



Wrathfully, he tried to throw Bender off.

Bender began to grow desperate. He could not desert the Irishman, and had no desire to do so; yet, to continue with him in his present condition would be folly. Nothing of their pursuers had as yet been heard, as Kickapoo Charlie was still wrangling with his visitors, in order to give the fugitives a good start, and the harassed puncher knew that if he was going to do anything, it should be done at once. It was not easy, however, to know what to do.

He thought once of tying the Irishman in his saddle and gagging him, but was afraid the strain would be more than a man in Pow-wow's condition could stand. If a good thrashing would have done the drunkard any good, he would have lit into him with a will. Pow-wow was as limp as a rag and lurched and pitched in the saddle. Bender had all he could do to keep him from falling off.

He paid no more attention to what Bender said to him than if he had not spoken, and made not the slightest effort to help himself. A couple of exasperated thumps in his ribs only added to his hilarity. He refused to be quieted and he refused to be offended. All of Bender's efforts were taken in good part and served no other purpose than to make him more uproarious than ever. He was drunk, rip-roaring drunk, and wanted the world to know it.

Bender's patience finally gave out. At his wit's end he nevertheless perceived that it would be impossible for them to continue as they were. He was of half a mind to stop and surrender. If they had to be taken, he thought, it would be much better for both of them if they gave up instead of letting themselves be captured at gunpoint.

He rejected the thought, however, almost instantly, as an inspiration came to him. The ponies had begun to splash through a little stream that flowed across the trail, and their *swashing* hooves gave him an idea. He wondered that he had not thought of it before. Pow-wow's feelings he no longer considered. If what he proposed to do seemed a little cruel, and

it did seem a little cruel, he went about it without compunction. With their liberty being so unnecessarily placed in jeopardy by the Irishman, he felt himself justified in doing almost anything.

Turning the ponies downstream, he let them splash through the water for a distance of several hundred yards. It was cold, bitterly cold. The wind was blowing and the temperature was almost down to freezing. He had not realized how bleak it was till his pony's hooves spattered several biting drops of water on the back of his hand. No less determined to go ahead with what he had in mind because of that, he presently stopped and, getting down, pulled Pow-wow out of the saddle.

"Well, Pow-wow, old socks," he gritted, rolling the mirthful Irishman over on the ground and straddling him, "I shore feel sorry for you. But that ain't gonna help you, none whatever. I'm gonna get you sober or I'm gonna kill you, one or the other, and I'm blamed if I care which it is. So you might as well grit your teeth and take your medicine like a man."

He began to unfasten the Irishman's shirt. Pow-wow, who was very ticklish, squirmed and twisted and bellowed with laughter. He soon changed his tune, however. When, after a struggle, Bender ripped off his shirt and the frosty wind nipped his skin, his laughter turned into an anguished howl.

"Murther!" he yelled. "Ohhhhh! Lave go of me. Ye are indacent. Whoop! Stop takin' off me clothes. 'Tis naked that ye are makin' me."

Wrathfully, he tried to throw Bender off; but Bender, grimly determined, kneeled on his arms, and continued to strip off his garments. Pow-wow, cursing vitriolically, bucked and rolled and heaved. Bender had him at a disadvantage, however, and within a short time the Irishman was in very much the same state that he was in on the day he was born.

His struggles grew, became more frantic. His teeth were chattering, his limbs shaking. He fought like a mad bull. Bender, having laid all feelings of friendship aside, gave him as good or better than he received.

The tussle became a real encounter. Had Pow-wow not been drunk, Bender would probably have been worsted, for, physically, the Irishman was the better man; but his strength had been undermined by the rotgut he had swilled in Arkansas City and it did not take the Kansan long to get the best of him. Bender then pinioned his arms behind him, picked him up bodily, swung him up above his head and, exerting himself to the utmost, hurled him in the water.

A strangled shriek and a loud *ker-plunk* marked the Irishman's descent into the stream. Water flew every which way. Bender was soaked to the skin. As the stream was scarcely a foot deep, and there was no danger of Pow-wow getting beyond his depth, Bender stood back and let him splash and bellow to his heart's content. Somewhat sobered by the icy coldness of the water, the Irishman floundered about like a whale having convulsions.

Spitting and gasping, he gained his knees and started to crawl out on the bank. Bender, wanting him to get the full benefit of the sobering effect of the water, attempted to push him back for a second ducking, and in doing so, came to grief. Grasping one of Bender's legs, Pow-wow gave it a violent jerk. Bender tried to save himself, but was unable to do so. Thrown off his balance, he fell forward on top of the Irishman and they plunged into the stream together.

The icy clutch of the water almost paralyzed Bender. It was all he could do to keep from letting out a yell. For the first time he realized just what he had subjected the Irishman to. Gasping for breath, he came to his feet, and, catching his quaking companion under the arms, hauled him out on the bank. Pow-wow's chattering teeth sounded like baby trip-hammers. He was too chilled either to resist or give any expression to his feelings whatever. All of the fight had been taken out of him, temporarily, at least, and Bender was confident that after he got warm, he would at least have sufficient control of his faculties to be reasoned with.

Hastily unfastening their blanket-rolls,

Bender swathed the Irishman from head to foot in their woolen folds. His own teeth were rattling against each other and he was shivering violently. Almost numb with cold, he worked in desperate haste till he got Pow-wow well wrapped up; then he lifted him up on his pony. Gathering up the Irishman's clothes, he grabbed the reins of the two ponies, yelled to Pow-wow to hold on, or fall off and be damned to him, and struck out through the starlight as hard as he could run. And Pow-wow did not fall off. He groaned and swayed eccentrically, but clung to the cantle with tenacity, and Bender knew his purpose had been achieved.

A quarter-mile from the trail, he came to a narrow arroyo. The brisk run had got his blood to circulating again and he was now in a warm glow. But his clothes were as wet and cold as ever and clung to him clammily. Turning into the arroyo, he left the Irishman to do his own dismounting, and, throwing all caution aside, set about collecting material for a fire.

First clawing together a pile of scrub-pine needles and dry jackoak leaves, he added to the collection anything inflammable that came within reach of his hand, and soon had a roaring fire going. While he was doing so, Pow-wow, who was now sober enough to know what he was doing, threw aside the blankets and shivered and shook himself into his clothes. He then wrapped himself up in the blankets again and laid down by the fire.

Bender soon followed his example. Divesting himself of his sodden clothing, he dried it and put it back on. Neither he nor Pow-wow spoke. Bender, for one thing, could think of nothing to say, and Pow-wow had not yet been able to figure out exactly what had happened to him.

Determined to go no farther that night, happen what might, Bender swaddled himself in his blanket and picked out a bed on the ground. And there, with the fire between them, they stayed till morning.

Nevada and her train crossed the stream in which the fugitives had involuntarily bathed themselves before Bender lighted the fire, and the arroyo, which was some little distance from the trail, was passed without either of the two parties suspecting the proximity of the other.

Naturally eager to catch up with Bender as soon as possible, Nevada spared neither her pony nor those of her escort. Dunne, because of his weight and not over-fond of riding at any time, grumbled at the mad-cap pace she set, wished himself in bed and gallantly raced on by her side. The others, with the exception of Kickapoo Charlie, straggled and began to drop behind. A mile or so beyond the stream, the trail-boss, who began to suspect that Bender had played some kind of trick on them, voiced a protest. Had Bender, handicapped as he was, stuck to the trail, Kickapoo Charlie knew they should have long since overtaken him.

"Thar ain't no use'n killin' our ponies," he argued. "We ain't gonna catch Ben tuh-night—he's got too long a start. Like as not he turned off the trail, anyhow, an' chuckled in his sleeve when we rode by. I know positively whar he's gonna be on Friday night, an' it's thar that we're gonna catch him. We're wearin' down our ponies for nothin'. Let's ride on back tuh Red Ridge like people uh sense. We ain't got no more chance catchin' him tuh-night than a tallow cat has uh runnin' down an asbestos mouse in Hades."

The truth of this Nevada would not at first admit, but after another hour or so she was compelled to do so. A halt was then called, and, after resting their horses, they rode to a nearby ranch and put up there for the night, or for the few hours that remained of it, at least.

At sunrise the journey was continued, and, early in the morning, several days later, they crossed the boundary-line of the Three Circles range. As the house was not very far out of the way, they decided to stop there before proceeding to Red Ridge, and see if Colonel Jim or any of his men had seen or heard anything of Bender.

The house, when it presently came into view, had an air of desertion. No one was in sight; the only living thing visible was a horse hitched at the rack in front of the house. Nevada, riding a little ahead of the others, eyed the animal with some

misgivings. To her it looked like the big bay that Hawthorne was accustomed to riding.

She was still gazing at it doubtfully when three shots, fired close together, rang out in the house. The reports were faint, for the house was still some way off, but unmistakable. Close upon them, Nevada and her companions saw the owner of the Bar O Bar run out of the front door. Jamming a smoking gun in his belt, he ran to the hitch-rack, vaulted on the back of the bay, and, apparently without seeing them, galloped away.

Kickapoo Charlie was the first to get started. The spikes of his spurs, cruelly applied, tore dripping gashes in his pony's sides. Bounding wildly, Slats headed for the house at a run. Dunne and Nevada, knowing not what to expect, followed a few yards behind.

CHAPTER XXI

Colonel Jim Makes His Will

COLONEL JIM was seated at a large round table in the center of the Three Circles' living room, busily engaged in writing. On the table within reach of his hand, reposed a glass of some sparkling, amber-colored liquor, of which he occasionally paused to sip. The document upon which he was working seemed to afford him a great deal of amusement, which was a rather surprising circumstance, in view of the fact that at the top of the page was written: "Last Will and Testament of James L. W. Byrd."

From which it may be deduced that Colonel Jim did not take the devising of his worldly goods very seriously. Nor did he. Will-making with Colonel Jim was a kind of a game, and one which he never tired of playing. As he did not expect to die for many years to come, he found the occupation hugely entertaining. He had made so many wills, he had forgotten the number. Whenever he was bored, and could think of nothing else to do, he drew up a new one. And, as he was without kith or kin, and his friends and acquaintances legion, the process was sometimes something of a Chinese puzzle.

Who to make his principal heirs was not a matter to be taken lightly. He therefore sometimes settled it by drawing straws, and as heirs are as easily unmade as made, if not more so, when he tired of one set, he promptly demolished it and substituted another.

In the present instance, however, he had experienced no difficulty in determining to whom to leave the bulk of his estate. At last he had found the heir which for years he had been searching for, and knew that he was drafting his will for the last time. The document completed, he laid it aside and wrote two letters. He then took a sip of toddy and pushed back his chair. Picking up his parchment, he glanced over it.

The will, which was brief and to the point, ran as follows:

> "I, James Lightfoot Wilfred Byrd, being of sound mind and body, do make this my last will and testament. First, I bequeath to Nevada Grace Hunter, sometimes known as Nevada Hawthorne, all property, both real and personel, that I may die possessed of, with the exception of the following bequests, and after all of my just debts have been paid. Provided, that at no time shall the said Nevada Hunter's step-father, William Hawthorne, be allowed, either directly or indirectly, to share in, enjoy, or in any way benefit by the principal or interest of said bequest. In the event of the said Nevada Hunter's refusal or failure to abide by the terms herein imposed, this section of my will is to become null and void, and all of said property is to be equally divided among the charitable institutions named below."

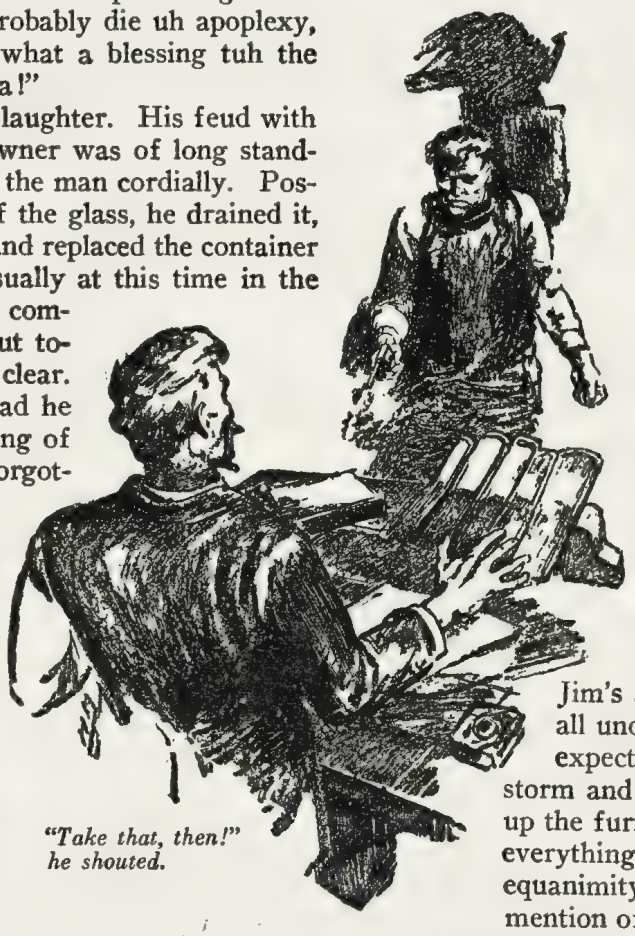
Followed a number of minor bequests to some of his friends and employees and the names of several charitable institutions which were to benefit by the will in case Nevada failed to live up to its terms. Colonel Jim beamed as his gaze traveled over the document's laboriously written but fairly legible lines. He laid the paper back on the table.

" 'Tis strange that after all uh these

years uh fruitless searching, I should be given such an inspiration," he chuckled. "'Tis stranger still that it should not have been given tuh me before. Nevada! She is, uh course, my one and logical heir, and always has been. Confusion tuh Bill Hawthorne! Wealth and happiness for the girl! An inspiration, indeed—a happy choice. The girl has a real affection for me and certainly I have no less for her. What a blow tuh Hawthorne, who, I understand, despises her. Ha! ha! ha! I can see his face now when he hears uh the girl's legacy and the proviso governing it. He will probably die uh apoplexy, and, if he does, what a blessing tuh the world. Ha! ha ha!"

He shook with laughter. His feud with the Bar O Bar owner was of long standing, and he hated the man cordially. Possessing himself of the glass, he drained it, smacked his lips and replaced the container on the table. Usually at this time in the morning he was comfortably "full," but today his head was clear.

So interested had he been in the drafting of his will, he had forgotten to take his usual number of drinks — something he could not recall ever having happened before. Prudent in all matters pertaining to business, he decided to call in two of his men to witness the will at once, and was on the verge of doing so when Abe shambled through the door.



"Take that, then!" he shouted.

Colonel Jim looked at his old servant amazedly. Abe was a pitiful object to behold. He looked as if he had seen a ghost. His face had turned a kind of dusky green; his eyes stuck out grotesquely. That he had received a shock of some kind was manifest. Colonel Jim hopped out of his chair.

"Abe! What's the matter with yuh?" he cried. "Are yuh ill?

"No, suh. No, suh, Cunnel," quavered Abe. "I's as well as eber, suh. Dey's a visitor waitin' in de hall to see yuh, suh. I's come to announce him."

"A visitor," shouted Colonel Jim, petulantly. "Who the devil has come here at such an infernal hour as this?"

"Mr.—Mr. William Hawthorne, suh," stammered Abe.

Colonel Jim stared at him. Not a muscle of his face moved. The veins on his forehead began to stand out, however, and his face to take on a purple tinge. Abe's senile legs were quaking.

"Did you say Bill Hawthorne?" demanded the rancher harshly.

"Yas, suh."

"He wishes to see me?"

"Yas, suh."

"Then, by the Eternal," said Colonel Jim, imperturbably, "show him in."

Abe could not conceal his astonishment. Colonel Jim's *sang-froid* was past all understanding. He had expected the rancher to storm and threaten and break up the furniture, and do 'most everything else but retain his equanimity. In the past, mere mention of Hawthorne's name had always been to Colonel Jim as a red flag to a bull, and Abe had thought his announcement would make a raving lunatic of his master.

But Colonel Jim had sense enough to realize that the time was not one for bluster. Owing to their mutual hatred of each other, a visit from Hawthorne at any time might be expected to have serious consequences. At the present time, this

was especially true. Guessing what it was that had brought the Bar O Bar owner there, he knew that the meeting would be unusually violent and explosive, and that, if he was not to get the worst of it, he would need all of his wits about him.

He glanced at the revolver lying on the table, and with one hand on the back of the chair, stood waiting till Hawthorne stamped into the room. Colonel Jim saw at once that his visitor had been drinking heavily. Hawthorne's face was flushed and his gaze inflamed. He gave Colonel Jim a venomous glare and strode over to the table. Colonel Jim, the purple of his own face taking on a deeper hue, watched him narrowly.

"What the hell's this I hear about what you've been doin' on my range?" he shouted, savagely. "I've just been told that durin' the night your men ran a new fence between here an' the Bar O Bar, an' that it cuts off a fifteen-foot strip of my range. That right?"

Colonel Jim's gaze became flinty.

"Yuh have been correctly informed, suh," was his cold reply.

"Yeah?" came the furious retort. "Well, I've ordered my men to tear the fence down. Got anything to say about it?"

"I have," returned Colonel Jim. "I've ordered my riders tuh kill the first man who lays his hand on it. I yesterday had the line re-surveyed, suh, and if it takes in what yuh appear tuh believe tuh be part uh yuhr range, it proves that for some time yuh have been grazin' yuhr cattle on land that did not belong tuh yuh."

Hawthorne's congested face contorted with rage. He crashed one fist down on the table, held it there, and, bringing up the other, shook it under Colonel Jim's nose.

"Damn you!" he cried thickly. "If you say that strip ain't mine, you lie. An' you know you lie. We've been over aller this a dozen times before, an' we ain't goin' over it any more. You're a fool an' a thief. You've been makin' trouble for me ever since I moved to this accurst country. You've been wranglin' about boundary-lines from the day I landed. You've crossed me every chance you got an' I've more'n once suspected that certain of my cows that have been rustled might be traced to the Three Circles. Here only a few weeks ago, when some of my men tried to apprehend an escaped murderer on your land, you an' your riders shot them down like dogs. Now, I've come to have a reckonin' with you. This latest outrage of yours I won't stand for. It's nothin' more nor less than thievery."

Colonel Jim was trying hard to control himself, but it was difficult for him to do so. Slowly, as his anger mounted, his chest began to swell, his eyes to distend. He blew through his lips, like a horse.

"Yuh have cyalled me a fool and a thief, suh," he said hoarsely, "knowing that in my own house, I cyan resent nothing yuh say. Only a coward would take such an advantage as that, suh."

Hawthorne's talonlike fingers closed on the butt of one of his guns. A red, maniacal glare came into his eyes.

"Coward!" he yelled, apoplectically. "I'll show you who the coward is. Go for your gun, damn you."

"I refuse tuh fight yuh in my home, suh," retorted Colonel Jim with dignity. "If yuh will accompany me tuh the public road, suh, I will exchange as many shots with yuh as may be necessary. I cyan think uh nothing that would please me more. But I will not draw now, suh. I could not, even if I wished tuh, as I am unarmed."

The owner of the Bar O Bar yanked out his gun.

"Take that, then!" he shouted, and fired point-blank at Colonel Jim.

The old campaigner shuddered. Putting his hand on the table, he leaned against it. His face became livid.

"Dastard!" he cried hoarsely. "Would yuh murder me? By God, suh——"

He caught up his revolver, swung the barrel on a level with Hawthorne's stomach and jerked the trigger. The hammer clicked and he remembered that the gun was not loaded. Only that morning he had taken it apart to clean and oil it, and had neglected to fill the chamber. Stepping up close to him, Hawthorne rammed the muzzle of his gun against the

other's breast and shot him once again.

"Ah," said Colonel Jim, softly, and collapsed.

"I reckon that'll hold you," ground out Hawthorne. "An' if it won't, mebbe this will."

He sent another bullet tearing into Colonel Jim's prostrate form, and, turning, ran out of the room.

For a moment Colonel Jim lay without movement. He had fallen forward on his face, and an irregular puddle of blood began to form around his head. Presently he moaned, feebly stretched out his hands and, with a herculean effort, pushed himself over on his side. Blood was gushing from his mouth and nostrils and his face and clothes were dyed with the bright fluid.

"By God," he gurgled, "he . . . he murdered me . . . in my own house . . . shot me down. But . . . he'll pay . . . in his own dirty coin. I'll tie a rope around his neck which even he . . . won't be able tuh shake off. If only I cyan reach the table . . . and . . . reach it . . . by heaven . . . I will."

He began to drag himself toward the table. Scratching and tearing at the carpet with his nails, slowly, painfully, inch by inch, he crossed the space between himself and his objective. It cost him a terrible effort. The flow of blood from his mouth grew larger, brighter; huge beads of sweat dripped from his brow. But the table was reached, finally and, moaning piteously, he paused for a second to rest. As he raised his palsied hand and grasped his will, Abe tottered through a back door into the room. The old negro threw up his hands in horror.

"Marster, marster!" he cried, aghast.

"Get Zack," gulped Colonel Jim. "Zack and somebody else. Hurry . . . get anybody . . . witnesses . . . my will. . . ."

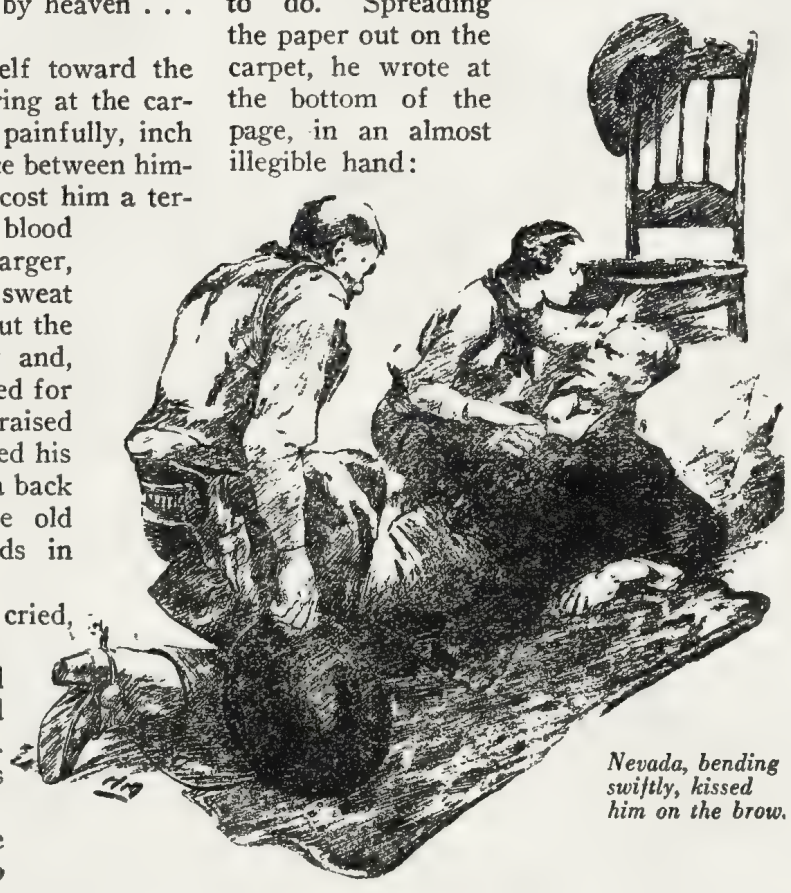
Abe, disregarding the command, shuffled over to where he was lying against the table.

"Gawdamighty, Cunnel," he faltered. "I knowed it! I knowed the minute I seen dat debbil, he didn't mean yuh no good. If he's done kilt you—you ain't gwine die, is you, Cunnel? I'll run for de doctor ——"

"Confound you," mumbled Colonel Jim in a strangled voice. "Get me . . . two witnesses. . . . If I die before this will is sign . . . I. . . ."

His voice trailed off. He tried to throw his empty revolver at Abe, but his strength was ebbing, and the weapon fell out of his hand. Tears rolled down the darkie's cheeks; his bosom heaved; his wrinkled lips quivered. Moved by the rancher's helplessness, perhaps, more than by his words, he turned and hurried away.

Raising himself a little, Colonel Jim got hold of a pen and thrust it into a bottle of ink. Then, his energy expended, he sank back on the floor. A moment only did he give to rest, however; he knew the end was drawing near, and he still had things to do. Spreading the paper out on the carpet, he wrote at the bottom of the page, in an almost illegible hand:



Nevada, bending swiftly, kissed him on the brow.

"10 a. m. Friday. I have been murdered by Bill Hawthorne. He entered the house and shot me twice. After I fell, and he thought I was dead, he shot me again. The brand of Cain is upon him. I die, despising him too much to waste upon him my curses. Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

JAMES L. W. BYRD."

The rancher's head drooped. Doggedly, with the flash of strength that is sometimes given the dying, he slowly moved his shaking hand up the paper, and began to affix his signature to the will. Footsteps sounded in the hall, but Colonel Jim, without heeding them, wrote on. Tracing each letter with infinite care, he got down his first name and middle initials, and was forcing the sputtering pen to form a capital "B" when Nevada, Dunne and Kickapoo Charlie rushed into the room.

"Colonel Jim!" yelled Kickapoo Charlie, shrilly, and, bounding across the room, fell to his knees by the rancher's side. "Who shot yuh, Colonel—Hawthorne?"

Colonel Jim looked at the trail-boss, then at Nevada and Dunne, and his drawn, almost colorless face lit up with pleasure. But he was past the power of speaking and did not at once attempt to make reply. He finished writing his name, then pointed at the lines scrawled on the bottom of the page. Hastily, Kickapoo Charlie scanned them and his brow grew dark with rage. He gripped the rancher's hand.

"Die in peace, if die yuh gotta, boss," he said in a cracked voice. "We'll git him —never fear. An' he won't hang, nuther; he'll die hard."

Colonel Jim thanked him with his eyes. Kickapoo Charlie, choking, started to rise, but Colonel Jim gently restrained him and put his fingers on the pen. Not comprehending, the trail-boss looked at him perplexedly.

"He wants yuh tuh witness his will," explained Dunne, huskily.

Colonel Jim's lids flickered. Signing his name to the paper in crude characters, Kickapoo Charlie dropped the pen and got off the floor. He blinked at the stricken rancher.

"*Adios,* boss," he growled in the depths of his throat, and made a hasty exit.

Dunne was too stout to get down on the floor with ease; but Nevada had already done so, and, too full for words, sat, with her cool palm resting on Colonel Jim's brow. Dunne took out a bandanna and blew his nose violently. Stooping, he picked up the will and pen.

"Keep up yuhr nerve, Jim," he encouraged his friend. "We'll git a doctor an' pull yuh through yit. It's allers a good plan, though, for a hombre tuh have his house in order in case the Lord cyalls on him unexpected-like. Yuh acknowledge this is yuhr last will?"

Colonel Jim's expression showed that he did, and Dunne signed the paper. Nevada was sobbing quietly. Gently raising Colonel Jim's bloody head, she put it on her lap and wiped some of the blood from his face. His dimming gaze met hers and she saw that he recognized her. She choked back her sobs.

"Colonel Jim," she whispered softly, "isn't there anything we can do for you? Can't you hold out till we get a doctor?"

The rancher made his last and greatest effort. She heard the air whistle through the bullet-holes in his chest as he drew in his breath.

"I have heard the voice of God," he said, with startling clearness, "and go in answer tuh His cyall. Farewell, my child . . . my more than daughter . . . Dunne . . . peace . . . good will . . . untuh yuh all."

Nevada, bending swiftly, kissed him on the brow. A smile lighted the rancher's waxen features, the ghost of a sigh escaped his lips, and, with his head pillowed in Nevada's arms, his soul winged its way into the Great Unknown.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DANGERFIELD GANG

THE night dragged by slowly for Bender. The hours seemed endless. Sleep he wooed in vain. Pow-wow began to snore almost at once, but Bender's thoughts were not conducive to slumber. From time to time he got up and replen-

ished the fire, for the night grew colder as it advanced and the ducking he had received, and which he could but admit had been well merited, had chilled him to the bone. Neither the heat radiating from the blazing pile of sticks and rubbish, however, nor his blankets seemed to warm him, and he tossed and rolled and turned.

Morning broke chill and cloudy, but he was glad to see it come. As soon as it was light enough for him to see, he got up and prepared breakfast from the scanty stores in his saddle-bags. He then routed out the Irishman, who swore at him good-naturedly, yawned prodigiously and after looking around him, surprisedly demanded to know where he was and why.

Mere knowledge of his whereabouts, however, which was promptly supplied by Bender, told him nothing. The "tear" he had gotten on in Arkansas City, while leaving him little the worse physically, had dimmed his memory and made it impossible for him to remember what had occurred. Faint remembrance of his icy bath remained to him, but he wasn't sure whether it had been an actuality or a dream, and kept looking at Bender out of the corner of his eye as if hoping to find on his face an answer to the puzzle.

He asked no questions, however, and as Bender offered no explanations, he finally decided, after examining his clothes and finding that they were perfectly dry, that his plunge had been a dream. Which, no doubt, was fortunate for Bender.

Bender was not sure whether Nevada and her party had passed the arroyo during the night or not; but to be on the safe side, he determined to leave the Sac and Fox Trail and take the main road back to Red Ridge. He was tired of playing hide-and-seek with the girl, anyway, and while he intended to take all reasonable precautions to guard against a premature meeting with her, he had made up his mind to do no more running away from her. If she should chance upon him, he would have a show-down, then and there, and have done with it.

The country road at that point was but four or five miles from the old cattle trail, and, after reaching it, as they had ample time to reach Red Ridge before Friday night, they made the return journey at a leisurely pace. The proposed robbery of the bank in the little cowtown gave Bender considerable food for reflection. If Griz had not been romancing, and there was no reason to believe that he had, it looked like a good opportunity to catch the whole gang red-handed.

Exactly who composed the gang, Bender did not know. Organized several years previously by Bob and Buck Dangerfield, both of whom had been killed during an attempted train robbery, the gang had changed membership many times since it had come into being; but it was the largest and most notorious of the several gangs then operating in the Southwest, and more than one marshal had worried himself gray, or been killed, trying to break it up.

The rough nature of the country, too, added to the difficulties of the law-enforcers. Much of the county was still unsettled and, as many of the outlaws were natives, the gang knew all of its back trails and hiding places. Several concerted drives against the outlaws had been made by the marshals detailed to run them to earth, but nothing had come of them.

Bender had been told, soon after coming to Oklahoma, that the gang then numbered over a dozen. Since then several had been killed or rendered *hors de combat,* including Griz, Powder River, Zatt and the two unknown outlaws who had fallen in The Dagger. Of the known members of the gang that remained, there were Gypsy Twigg, Tom Shepherd and the foreman of the Bar O Bar. Probably there were several others besides.

Who the present leader was was unknown even to the marshals. Buck Dangerfield had been the first leader, and after his death a man called Arkansas Bill had assumed command. But he, too, had been killed, and his shoes filled by nobody knew whom. Virtually all of the outlaws had prices on their heads, and if the whole gang could be gathered in at one fell swoop, it would be a real accomplishment.

In Bender's estimation, however, the rewards were a minor consideration. It

had been his contention from the first that, either directly or indirectly, the gang was responsible for Gridley's murder, and he believed that the mysterious circumstances attending the crime might be cleared up by the apprehension of some of the outlaws. And, in that, naturally, his chief interest lay.

Pow-wow, for widely different reasons, was as interested in the robbery as Bender was. Any attempt to frustrate it, he knew, would in all probability result in a gun-fight, and, with the possible exception of a fight with his bare fists, there was nothing under the sun that he liked better. So long as he was engaged in something exciting and hazardous, he cared not what he did, and as Bender seemed to specialize in matters pertaining to violence and sudden death, Pow-wow asked nothing better than to be allowed to remain with him.

Traveling more slowly than did Nevada's troop, though by a somewhat more direct route, Bender and Pow-wow did not reach the environs of Red Ridge till Friday afternoon.

A half-mile or so from the cowtown, Bender descried five horsemen on the road some distance ahead of them. Beyond giving them an idle glance, however, he paid them no attention. Nothing could be seen of them but their backs, and he supposed them to be a party of cattlemen on their way to town. As the horsemen were riding very slowly, he soon cut down the distance between them, and by the time they reached town, he and Pow-wow were separated from them by only a few yards.

They were passing the town square, when one of the horsemen turned slightly and Bender got a glimpse of his profile. Fleeting though the glance was, it proved a revelation. Three things Bender saw: first, that the man wore a black beard, second, that, because of the way it flared out where it met his scalp, it was false, and, third, that the man himself was Gypsy Twigg. As Bender had engaged in a gun-fight with the outlaw in Arkansas only a few months previously and knew the man well, he was sure he had not erred in his identification of him.

Making a sign to Pow-wow, he turned into a side street and hastily dismounted. Pow-wow, who had his eye on the sign-board of The Eagle Bar, glared at him.

"Phwhat in hell are ye stoppin' here for?" he demanded irritably. "Let's ride on up the street an' git a drrink. Me mouth feels like 'tis full of cotton."

"You won't get a drink now," said Bender, shortly. "The Dangerfield Gang is now riding down th' street toward th' bank. By some lucky chance, I saw them just before we turned in here. Either Griz lied or th' gang changed their plans and are aiming to stick up th' bank twelve hours ahead of time. It's a pity, too. There's no chance of laying a trap for them now. Hell's due to pop."

Pow-wow almost fell off his pony in his eagerness to get to the ground.

"Then we're in luck, indade," he responded, jovially. "Sure, an' me soul is crravin' music even more than me body is a drrink. How many of the bloody hathen are there?"

"Five," said Bender. "That makes four for you and one for me." He smiled. "We'll give them a chance to reach th' bank before we start anything. We only have Griz's word for it that they are going to rob it, an' if they're really aiming to do so, I want to catch them in the act."

He walked to the corner and gazed down the street. Pow-wow craned his head over his shoulder. The horsemen had reached the bank, at the other end of the block, and were leisurely dismounting in front of it on the opposite side of the street. Bender saw that all of them were bearded, which was of itself singular enough to create suspicion, though it apparently failed to do so.

Carelessly brushing the dust from their clothes, four of the outlaws, separating into groups of two, started across the street. The fifth member of the party remained with the ponies. His badly bowed legs made Bender suspect him of being the foreman of the Bar O Bar. He gave the man but a glance, however; his gaze was on the others. Reaching the sidewalk, the bearded four converged upon the door, and casually entered the bank.

(To be concluded in the next issue.)

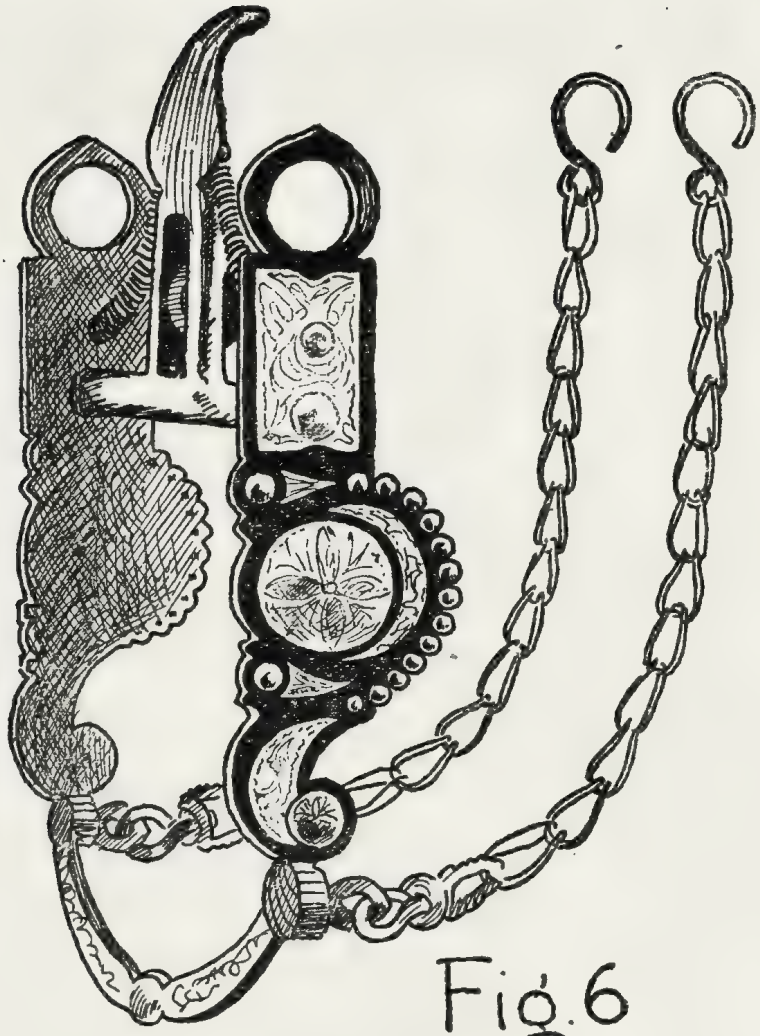


Fig. 6

TRAPPINGS OF THE MIGHTY

A FACT ARTICLE ABOUT COWBOY EQUIPMENT

By
E. W. Thistlethwaite

With Illustrations by the Author

This article is as interesting as any story ever written.

HAVING discussed pretty thoroughly the question of saddles in a previous article, let us now take a look at some of the other articles of a cowboy's equipment.

Although, in meeting ten or a dozen cowboys on the range, you would probably notice that no two use bridles exactly alike, the whole bunch might be divided into two distinct classes—the regular style, with brow band and throat latch; and the ear head. The former is by far the more common in most sections of the country.

There are about fifteen dozen ways of making a riding bridle, so of course we can't describe or picture them all, but will have to let it go at two or three.

Fig. 1 shows a heavy leather bridle, common in the northern cattle country. Bridles of this style are occasionally lined with calf leather, and may be basket stamped, as shown, or even hand flowered, but are more often made of plain leather. The rosettes, conchas, etc., are nickel or German silver.

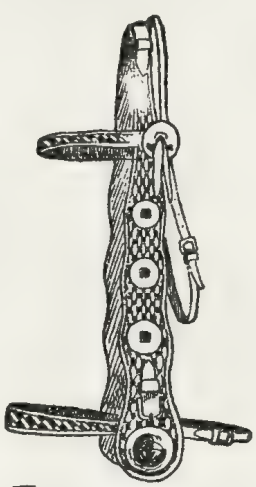


Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig. 2 gives you a good idea of the type of riding bridle common in California. All buckles, ferrules, spots, etc., are usually solid silver, and finely engraved, though bridles of similar style are made with nickel trimmings.

Bridles like the one shown in Fig. 1 are usually sold with reins made of soft latigo leather, about an inch wide and six and a half feet long, with slide loops at the bit end. The price of headstall and reins varies from six to ten dollars. When sterling silver trimmed, a riding head similar to Fig. 2 costs around twenty dollars without reins.

California reins are made round, of hand braided rawhide, four to sixteen strands, and have braided loops at the bit end, while at the other end is a detachable "romal" with a heavy quirt lash. The entire length is about eight feet. The general appearance and construction is shown in Fig. 3.

The little knobs shown in the drawing are known as "buttons," and the number of these, together with the number of rawhide strands, determines the price of the reins. Less expensive reins have twelve to sixteen buttons, while the better grades may have as many as eighty, or even more. A good pair costs around eight dollars.

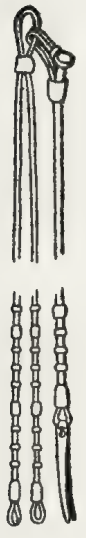


Fig 3

Fig 4

The ear head, Fig. 4, is usually made with a loop for the right ear only (as shown) and has no throat latch. Adjustment may be made either by a buckle each side, or one on the left cheek only.

There is a prejudice against ear bridles in some sections of the country, the reason being that many of them rub sores around a horse's ears. The trouble, however, is not in the principle of the ear bridle, but merely in the way the loop is shaped, as bridles of this type are made which fit perfectly, and give every satisfaction. The ear loop shown in Fig. 4, while not very common, is one of the best styles made. Ear heads without reins cost from three dollars up.

Hand-made hair, and braided rawhide bridles are seldom met with outside of frontier shows. The former cost three or four times the price of a good leather bridle, and are generally considered as not worth the price. Braided rawhide bridles may be bought from five dollars up.

Next we come to the question of bits.

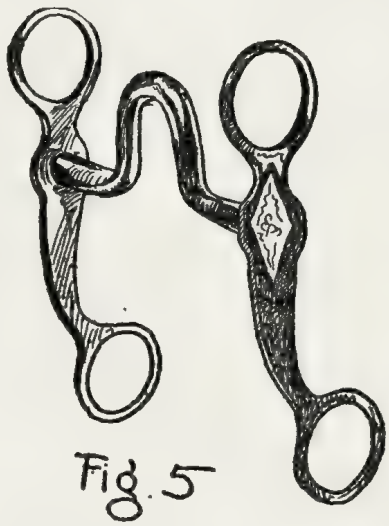


Fig. 5

Fig. 5 shows a typical example of the light-weight Montana, or, as it is sometimes called, "grazing" bit. This is the style commonly used all over the cattle country with the exception of California, Nevada and possibly Oregon.

The majority are hand made, and are mounted with German silver or with a metal resembling gold; sometimes with both, the mountings being roughly engraved. The average cost, mounted, is five

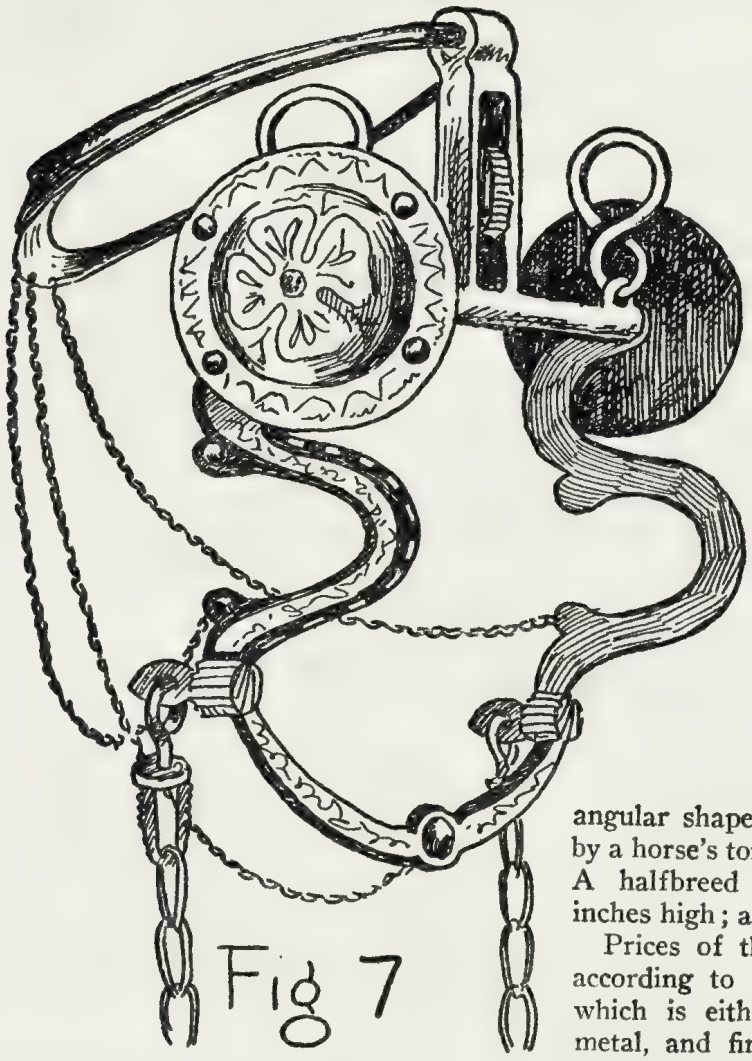


Fig 7

or six dollars; and unmounted, about three.

Figs. 6 and 7 are examples of what are popularly known as "Spanish" bits. The former, which is a spade bit, is the type that is in almost universal use throughout California and Nevada. Note the rein chains ending in "S" rings. These rings are left open, as shown, when the bit is made, so that the loops on rawhide reins may be slipped on, after which the ring is closed with a hammer. The extreme length of the cheeks, averaging about seven and a half inches, is slightly longer (thus giving a little more leverage) than the average Montana bit, though a few of the latter are made that long.

A "halfbreed" bit is identical with the above, except that the spade itself, with its copper wire braces, is left off. A half-breed mouthpiece is shown in Fig 8.

Fig. 7 shows a common type of ring bit. The ring, as shown in the drawing, is attached to the top of the mouthpiece and is made just large anough to go around a horse's lower jaw, taking the place of the curb strap used with all the other bits described above. It will be noticed that the rings to which the *bridle* is attached are loose "S" rings, this being common in this type of bit, but not universal.

All Spanish type bits have a roller or cricket in the mouthpiece. (See Fig. 8.) This roller has a hole in the center, as shown, and is mounted on a triangular shaped axle, so that when rolled by a horse's tongue, it makes quite a racket. A halfbreed mouthpiece is about two inches high; and a spade, three and a half.

Prices of these bits vary a good deal, according to the amount of inlay work, which is either coin silver or the pure metal, and finely engraved. A spade or halfbreed bit, such as shown in Fig. 6, costs about twenty-five dollars, and a ring bit, Fig. 7, costs about thirty dollars.

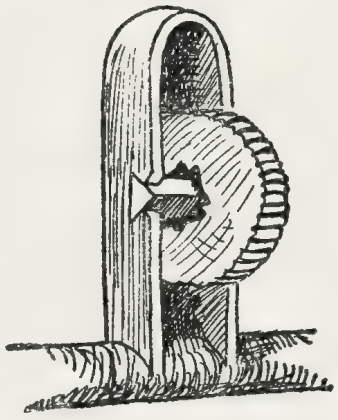


Fig. 8

There are a great many misguided people who are under the impression that any kind of a Spanish bit is cruel on a horse. Of course, they can be *used* cruelly, as can any bit. But if used properly, they are just as easy on a horse as any other kind of bit.

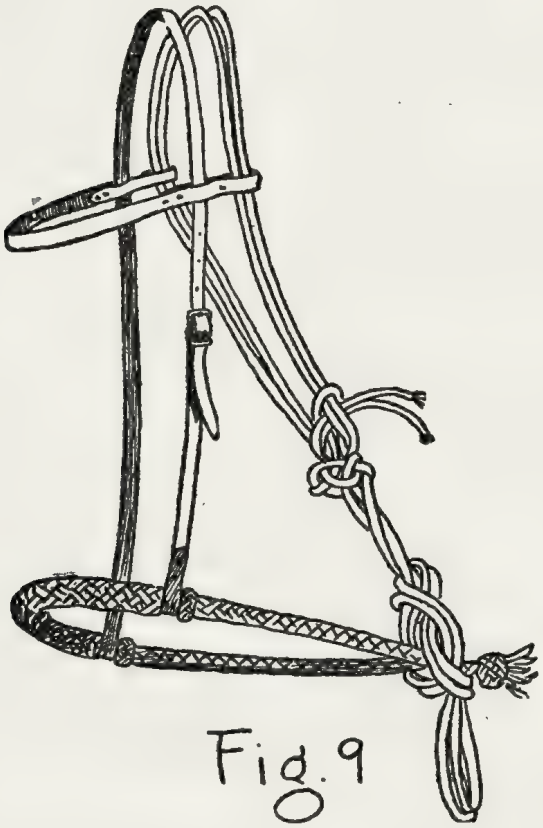


Fig. 9

In the cow country, anything in the shape of a halter, whether made of leather, rawhide or rope, is called a "hackamore." It may consist merely of a bosal (pronounced bo-za-al) or noseband, with a narrow thong to hold it in place. Or it may be rigged like a bridle, with adjustable head, browband and throatlatch. The latter is made of braided cotton rope, and is called a "theodore." (Fig. 9.)

Fig. 10

The bosal is the main part of it, and is hand made, of braided rawhide, six to twelve (or more) strands, and may be single (Fig. 9) or double (Fig. 10). Single bosals are sometimes made with nose buttons (Fig. 11), but the style shown in Fig. 9 is the most common.

Fig. 11

Bosals cost from a dollar six bits to five dollars. Leather head and theodore, about a dollar and a half extra.

Chaparejos (pronounced "shapareras") or "chaps," as they are generally called, are worn a good deal by cowboys, but not half so much as the movies would have us believe. They are made in a variety of styles, the two main classes being leather chaps and hair chaps.

The old style leather chaps were made with closed legs, laced up the outer side, and with a fringe three or four inches long stitched in under the lacing.

Although these chaps are still being made, and are in common use in certain sections of the country, most leather chaps are now made in the "batwing" style—that is, the old-time fringe has been replaced by a solid leather flap, which may be anywhere from four to twelve inches wide. The legs are still sometimes laced (so that the chaps have to be pulled on like a pair of pants), but are more often fastened down the leg with small snaps and rings, or sometimes with leather loops and buttons, so the legs may be opened out every time the chaps are taken off. Chaps are made with as few as three snaps on each leg, or as many as seven or eight, there being usually the same number of conchas on the outside as there are snaps and rings underneath, the latter being fastened by the same lace strings which hold on the conchas.

The leather may be brown, light gray, chocolate, black, yellow or green. Contest riders' or show chaps are generally made in two colors, see Fig. 12, and are often further ornamented with a thousand or more nickel or silver spots, but regular

Fig. 12

cowboys usually wear plainer chaps of one color—generally brown or gray.

In regard to pockets, the patch pockets shown in Fig. 12 are more for looks than anything else, but there are two or three kinds of inside pockets which are really of some use. Occasionally chaps are made without pockets at all.

The bottom of the leg is often rounded off on the inside, so that the lowest snap is ten inches or more from the bottom of the chap leg. This is variously known as the "Texas" or "Cheyenne" style leg. See Fig. 13.

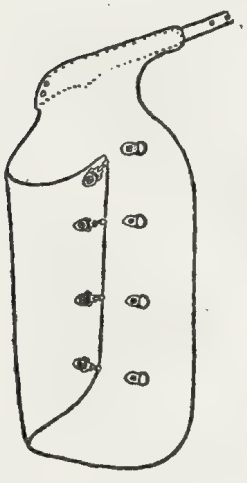


Fig 13

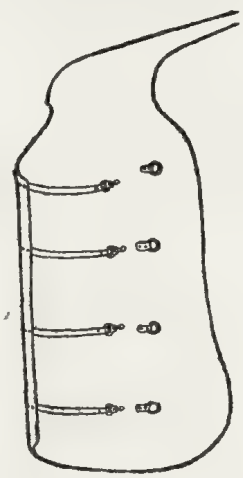


Fig 14

During hot summer weather, "chinks" are sometimes worn instead of full-leg chaps. They are made just the same as regular "bat" chaps, except that narrow straps take the place of the inside of the leg, making them much cooler to wear. See Fig. 14.

Hair chaps are sometimes made with sheepskin or bearskin, but are ordinarily made with the skins from the California Angora goat, the hair on these animals being very silky, and growing to considerable length. Usually in Angora chaps, the hair is six or seven inches long and is dyed any color to suit the purchaser, black, white (natural) and orange being the most popular and satisfactory. The front of the leg, only, is made with skins, and is lined with canvas. The backs are plain leather, usually horsehide.

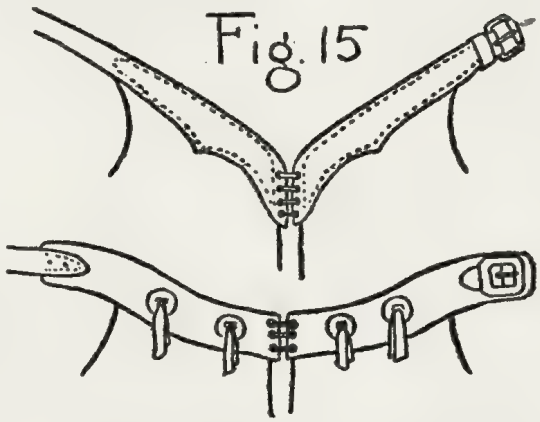


Fig. 15

This style of chap is more often made in the closed leg style, though hair chaps with batwings are made to some extent. The bat may be plain leather with some fancy figures in nickel or silver spots, or it may be hair like the front of the leg, in which case the bat is lined either with canvas or leather.

"Pinto" chaps are made in both the wing and closed styles by the addition of spots of different colored hair which are stitched on. Thus a chap may have white or orange hair fronts with black spots, or black hair with white, orange or yellow spots, etc., in any combination.

C. S.

It will be noticed in Fig. 12 that the buckle for the waistband is located on the left-hand side, not right at the back. The waistband, itself, is always made in at least two, usually three pieces, the front being fancy shaped and often hand-stamped or ornamented with conchas.

When turned out of the shop, the two ends are laced together (Fig. 15), but cowboys almost invariably cut the lacing out, and substitute a single thong, spreading the ends several inches apart (Fig. 16), which brings the wings round to the side and makes them set better.

Fig. 16

Regarding the uses of chaps, although they give you a rather firmer grip on the saddle, they are more of a nuisance than anything else, unless the weather is very cold or wet, or you have to do a lot of riding through thorny brush.

Hair chaps are great things to wear when the weather gets down below zero, and they protect you well if a colt slams you against a fence or falls on you, but they're away too hot to wear in the summer. They shed rain well, but the hair tears out if you ride through brush.

Leather chaps, unless oiled, will not shed rain very well, but are a good protection against cold, while oil-tanned chaps are no good in a cold country, as they freeze stiff as a board ten minutes after you get outside, but they shed rain like a tin roof. Either kind is good for brush riding, but is hot and uncomfortable in summer. Each kind has its disadvantage.

Chaps of any kind are very generally worn for show more than anything else.

First-class plain leather batwing chaps can be bought for twenty dollars, and show chaps in two colors for thirty. Hair chaps cost from twenty-five to thirty-five.

Back in the early Texas days, the standard cowboy hat was of the low-crowned, flat-brimmed style, somewhat similar to those worn to-day by many of our forest rangers. This type of hat, however, has been replaced for a good many years now, as far as cowboys are concerned, by others of much higher crown, and with curled instead of flat set brims. The two styles which are now generally regarded as the standard cowboy shapes are the Carlsbad and the Big Four.

Fig. 17

The Carlsbad (Fig. 17) is made regularly with a seven-inch tapered crown, and a four-inch curled brim, slightly rolled at the sides and dipped back and front. The Big Four is similar in general appearance, but the crown is a little lower, and is built straight up (that is, without the taper).

During the last five or six years, however, there has been a general trend toward the adoption of hats of larger dimensions, and although this movement was at first chiefly among professional contest riders and Wild West showmen, it has spread until it is now no uncommon thing to meet a regular forty-a-month rider sporting a war-bonnet with a brim five, or even five and a half inches wide and a crown eight inches high.

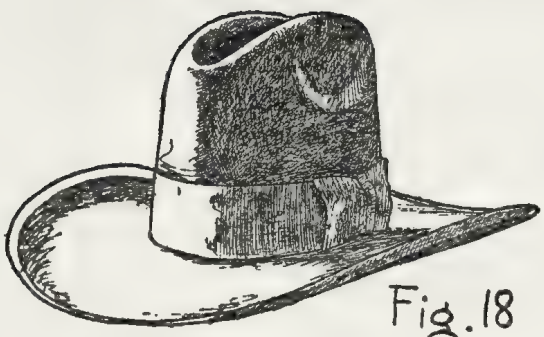


Fig. 18

While the majority of these hats may be regarded as merely larger editions of the Carlsbad, there is one new style which has gained considerable favor, particularly among contest riders. This style has the usual high crown, but the brim is uncurled, and flat set, save for a slight roll on the sides. The crown is usually worn creased, as shown in Fig. 18.

In regard to the methods of creasing the crown one, two or three dents are often made, or the crown may be creased as in Fig. 18, or worn straight up as in Fig. 17. But the old system of making four dents has been out of date for many years.

The usual color for all cowboy hats is a kind of fawn, or "belly beaver," as it is called, the felt being made with fur taken from the under side (belly) of the beaver, and left in its natural color. Black and tobacco brown hats are also made, and in the last few years a new shade called "buckskin," which is nearly white, has gained considerable popularity. The belly beaver, however, still largely predominates. Rough, plush-finish velour hats are made in belly, silver beaver, golden brown, black, tobacco brown and green. The crown band and brim binding (if any) may be the same color as the felt or in some contrasting shade.

It may be news to a good many readers to learn that there are a great many qualities of felt, and that the same style of hat varies greatly in price, according to the quality of felt used. Thus a good fur felt Carlsbad may be bought for five dollars, while the same hat made by John B. Stetson Co., even in their cheapest quality, costs about twelve dollars. Besides this twelve-dollar grade, which is known as "Stetson's No. 1," there are half a dozen others—"boss raw edge," "clear nutria," "real nutria," "3 X beaver," "5 X beaver," etc.; so that you can pay as high as fifty dollars for a hat which may be bought in a cheaper felt for five.

I might mention that even the five-dollar article is one which most people would call a very good hat. It will turn any amount of rain, and will hold its shape throughout a long period of hard usage.

Fancy hat bands are worn a good deal, but are by no means universal. In the north country, stamped leather bands are favored generally, but in the Southwest, silver-mounted horsehair bands are more common. Snakeskin and Indian beaded bands are also in evidence in some parts of the country.

Fig. 19

It is surprising how few people really know what cowboy boots are like. The general opinion seems to be either that they are heavy, clumsy and ill-fitting or very tight-fitting and uncomfortable to wear. Most riders are very particular about the fit of their boots, and often have them made to measure.

The sole is usually made one thickness and medium light, the shank (or the part between the sole proper and the heel) being made extra heavy, and rounded, and often reinforced by a steel plate. The idea in making the shank so heavy is to make it possible for a rider to rest a good deal of his weight on a pair of narrow bottom stirrups all day, without crippling his feet, as he would do if he wore ordinary boots or shoes. Cowboys, of course, thrust their feet into the stirrups clear up to the heel, and do not rest any weight on the ball of the foot. The heels are made anywhere from one and three-quarters to two and a half inches high, and are slanted straight under the boot, so that the bottom of the heel measures only about an inch and a half across, either way. This is shown in Fig. 19.

The vamp of the boot is generally of fine calf, kangaroo, or occasionally alligator; and the top, or leg, while it may be of the same leather, is more often kid or morocco, being soft leather, lined to give it a certain stiffness, and fancy stitched in intricate designs with from one to five rows of colored silk thread. Practically all cowboy boots are made by hand, in a most careful manner, and are designed to give the utmost in service and comfort.

Contest or show riders often have their

Fig. 20

boot tops inlaid with white or colored leather in various and beautiful designs, involving flowers, butterflies, steer heads, hearts, brands, initials and the like.

In Canada a good many cowboys wear short, elastic-sided "gaiters" or "riding congress" shoes (see Fig. 20), which are made on the same lasts as cowboy boots, and have the same heavy shanks and high heels. These shoes are favored by a good many bronk riders, because if a man gets thrown, and one of his feet becomes tangled in the rigging, a congress shoe will pull off, whereas a close-fitting boot will not. Cowboy dress shoes are also made similar to the above, but laced in the regular way.

Fig 21

Probably a good many readers have noticed in pictures by Frederic Remington, Ed. Porein and others that cowboys are shown wearing boots similar to the one shown in Fig. 21. I would like to explain that this is the old-time cowboy boot, made higher and a good deal heavier than the present-day style. It is not uncommon to see old-timers wearing them yet, although you rarely see them offered for sale. Note the long leather pull tabs or "mule ears."

In regard to prices, boots similar to Fig. 19 cost from fifteen to twenty-five or thirty dollars; inlaid boots, from thirty to forty; and riding congress, and dress shoes, from seven-fifty to about twelve dollars.

Spurs are made in two general patterns which correspond with the two styles of bits described above, but in this case it is the California style which is the smaller and lighter in weight.

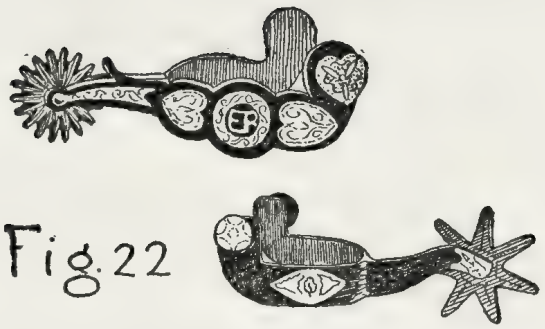


Fig. 22

The two sketches shown in Fig. 22 give a fair idea of the general appearance of what, for want of a better name, we'll call the Texas spur. Most of them are made in Texas, anyway, though they are worn in many other states. These spurs are usually rather heavy weight, with heel bands an inch or so wide, and rowells from two to three inches in diameter. They are made by hand, in a score or more of different patterns, and are mounted similar to the Montana bits.

Fig. 23

Fig. 23 shows a typical high-grade California spur, made also by hand, and inlaid and engraved by a master craftsman. These spurs are not made in large quantities and according to a fixed pattern, but are usually made to order, so that heel band, shank and rowell may be made exactly to suit the buyer.

Texas spurs cost around eight or ten dollars on the average; and California spurs, in the neighborhood of twenty or twenty-five dollars.

Spur straps are usually sold separately, and cost from seventy-five cents up. A couple of common styles are shown in Fig. 24. The buckle goes inside.

While on the subject of spurs, I might mention that few of them, especially the Texas pattern, will stay on any ordinary boot or shoe. Cowboy boots are so shaped that the average size will hold any kind of a spur, but if a man wears very small boots, he sometimes drives a horse-shoe nail into the back of the heel near the top, leaving the head exposed, thus forming a projection for the spur to rest on.

In order to prevent the spur from riding up, a strap, or sometimes a cross section

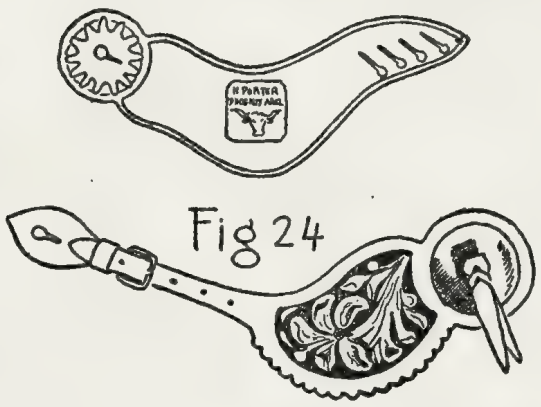


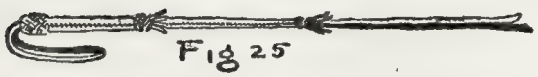
Fig 24

cut from an auto tube is put over the spur shank, crossed, and then slipped around under the shank of the boot, in front of the heel. I imagine that with a rigging like this, spurs could be used on any kind of boots or even shoes.

As regards his dress, apart from his hat and boots, the cowboy is not at all particular. Of course, at Frontier shows, July 4th celebrations and the like, you see some of the riders all dressed up in bright-colored shirts and scarfs, but you never see them that way on the range. The working rig of most cowboys consists of a pair of blue denim waist overalls, and a faded blue cotton shirt, open at the neck.

They don't wear silk scarfs as big as saddle-blankets, draped over their chests, like the movie cowboys do, and they almost never wear wide leather belts, leather cuffs or calfskin vests with the hair on. Gloves are commonly worn, but not the fringed gauntlets with horseshoes on the back, like you see in pictures. In an Indian country, cowboys occasionally get hold of beaded gauntlet gloves, but they commonly use short gloves, gray buckskin or horsehide, with snap or drawstring fasteners.

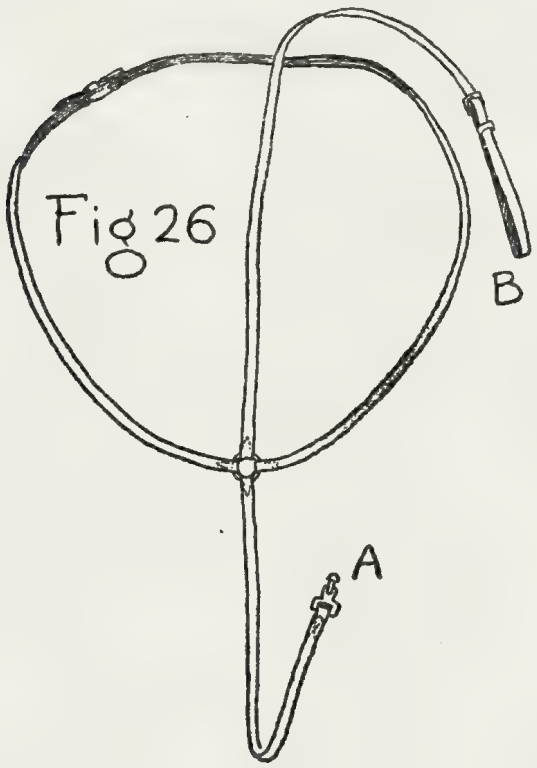
During the winter time, in the north country, short mackinaw, or sheep-lined canvas coats, heavy wool shirts and pants, together with fur caps and high laced moccasins or shoe packs, make the cowboys



look very much like any other outdoor workers.

"Oregon City" or "California" pants, made from a heavy all-wool fabric, are made for cold weather riding, and are used a good deal by cowboys. It is possible also to get lined, buckle-overshoes which are specially made to fit cowboy boots, but these are worn chiefly in the spring, when the snow begins to get soft and is too deep for moccasins.

Leather, or canvas sleeved vests, blue denim "jumpers" and short leather riding coats are worn all over the country. In wet weather, yellow pommel slickers, made of thin, oiled, cotton material, are the rule, though in some parts of the country you may occasionally see a "poncho," which is a kind of a waterproof blanket with a hole in the middle to put your head through.



Although this about completes the list of articles which can rightly be considered as belonging to a cowboy's equipment, in order to make this quite complete, there are a few miscellaneous things occasionally used by cowboys, which might be mentioned.

Fig. 25 shows a common style of riding quirt, made with a stitched, oiled leather cover. Similar quirts are also made of brown and white braided calfskin, or rawhide. They average between two and three feet long, and the handle is usually shot loaded. In riding, particularly when working cattle, a quirt is more of a nuisance than anything else, and is always getting lost, unless you have a good snap on your saddle to hold it. Long stock whips, "mule skinners," etc., are occasionally used in the mountains, where dogs are used to get the cattle out, but rarely otherwise.

Fancy breast collars and martingales are used sometimes, but principally for show, although plain ones (Fig. 26) are occasionally used on horses that have a habit of throwing their heads up suddenly, or raring up on their hind legs. When used

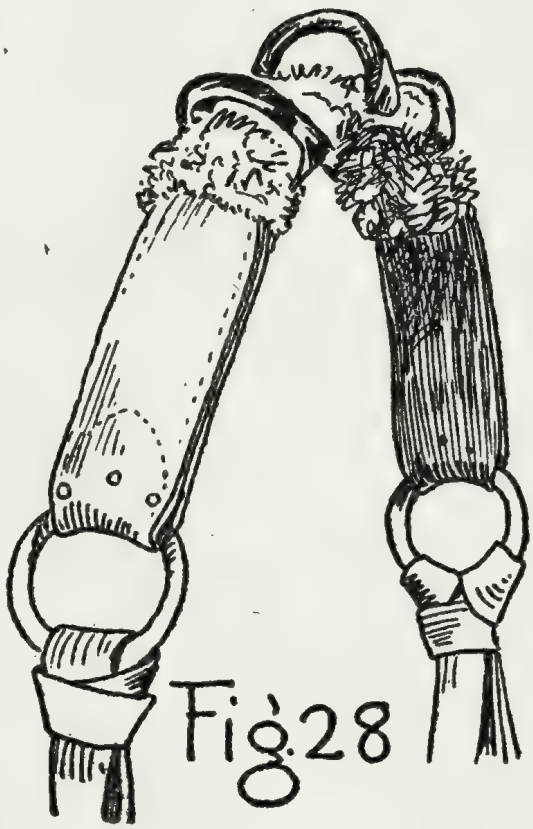
thus, the snap A is hooked into the cinch, and the strap B is buckled through the noseband or bosal.

Anyone who reads much Western fiction must get the idea that no rider ever goes anywhere without a pair of saddle pockets or cantinas or both. As a matter of fact, they are quite uncommon, especially the cantinas (which hang on the fork of a saddle, on each side of the horn). Either is too small to hold much of anything, anyway. Those big, three-buckle bags you see in the movies are old army stuff, and not used by cowboys.

A common style of saddle pocket is shown in Fig. 27. Other styles are made with long Angora hair flaps, or leather flaps extending clear to the bottom of the pocket. Cantinas are made very similar, only smaller, and with a hole in the leather which connects the pockets, for the saddle horn.

There is just one more article left to describe, and that is the surcingle, or "bull riggin'," which is used in "bareback" riding—bulls, steers, cows or horses—at the rodeos and Wild West shows.

A surcingle consists merely of a broad strap, usually double, and sometimes wool lined, with a large ring at each end for latigos and cinch, and three hand holds in the center. See Fig. 28. The center hand hold is used only when the contest rules call for one-hand riding; otherwise the rider grips the two outer hand holds and, with feet well forward, and thighs braced under his wrists, can stay on practically anything "with hair on it," provided his hand, arm and shoulder muscles are good.



THE IDEAL COW HORSE

COLOR of horses does not count with the cow waddy so much as the build, weight and size of the animal. The ideal horse, for all around range work, weighs between nine hundred and a thousand pounds. It can be a trifle lighter than nine hundred, but should not be heavier than a thousand pounds. The larger the horse, the less stamina it has for traveling over rough country and climbing mountainous ranges. A waddy likes to see them run close to nine hundred. Little horses "eat less and travel longer" in the general opinion of the range rider. The truth of the matter is that they have less weight of their own to pack around with them.

The "mountain horse" is the type that is short in the back, high at the withers and deep from there to the chest. This denotes tremendous lung power and climbing ability. The chest should be full and very broad. The animal should have "at its four corners" legs that are moderately short, strong, straight, with compact joints and sound hoofs.

The horse to be used in more level open country can be built a trifle rangier in every respect, with longer legs and longer back and long, string, steel-cable muscles.

When it comes to the appearance of a horse's head, however, most riders agree that the best horse has a head broad between the eyes and ears. That is where they read the animal's intelligence. The head should be carried well up, but not high when traveling. The nose should be slightly Roman and the eyes large and clear and showing no white.

When it comes to color, there personal taste enters in to a great extent. Some want iron grays, some are keen for duns. Some like pintos, some will pay more for buckskins. The paint speckled calico or piebald animals, all descendants from the Indian ponies, are last choice animals generally. Not many riders like chalk white horses, but the man who can get a pure black, or better still, cream white, considers himself very much in luck.

THE HITCHIN'-RACK

A Get-Together Department for Our Readers

Come on, folks. Tie your hawsses to THE HITCHIN'-RACK. Perhaps later on there will be a letter waiting for you in the post office—a letter from a cowboy who rides the herd at night dreaming of some girl back East—or from a Texas ranger doing his bit along the Mexican border—or from some buckaroo in Oregon cooling his heels on a corral fence.

Letters must be addressed to THE HITCHIN'-RACK — if intended for publication in this department. If you want to open up a correspondence with someone, state this clearly in your letter, together with your name and address, and you will receive your answers direct.

This department cannot be held responsible for statements made by letter writers.

Do not send any money to strangers.

A stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

PARAGRAPHS FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The Story of This Month's Cover

THAD BOWERS, of the Circle Cross Ranch, had one of the finest mounts in the outfit. But he invariably had his troubles with the horse. Every morning, when the broncs were saddled for the day's work, Bowers knew that he had to expect to be the headliner in a one-man rodeo; every morning he had to show his steed that he was the master. This morning was no exception to the general rule.

He had no sooner hit the leather than Wild One, as he called him, went into action. There was the usual buck-jumping and swapping ends, when suddenly Wild One tried out a new stunt. He hopped sideways, and at the same time reared and whirled in the air, going through the motions of something that closely resembled the pinwheel. Thad knew just what to expect, being an experienced waddie, and he knew that he must get out from under if he hoped to escape a broken leg, at least.

Our cover for this month, done for us in oils by W. F. Soare, shows Thad in the act of going down with Wild One, both feet out of the stirrups, in preparation for landing on the ground. It is the most exciting moment of the whole fray. When the horse landed, Thad was able to roll out of the way of flying hoofs and be all set to mount Wild One again when he rolled back to get up. Thad Bowers accomplished it, as you must know from looking at the cover and seeing how perfectly he was prepared for what was to follow. He holds the reins with his left hand, his right arm is ready to catch him and break his fall, his right foot is held in readiness to help him land without injury, and his left leg is poised for an easy escape from the saddle.

Wild One usually tried only one trick a morning; then he was ready to go until the saddle was removed at night. He was a natural cutting horse and so was invaluable on round-up. Wild One, except for his morning's morning, showed in many ways that he was loyal to Thad, but he always made Thad earn that loyalty.

Rodeo Contests for 1927

ARIZONA

Prescott—Prescott Frontier Days. July 1-5. Grace M. Sparkes, secy., Box 618.

CALIFORNIA

Coarsegold—Cattlemen's Rodeo. May 8.

Fresno—San Joaquin Valley Rodeo, ausp. Fire Dept. May 20-22. Thos. Baird, chrm.; L. L. Douglass, secy.

Livermore—Livermore Rodeo. July 2-4. M. G. Callaghan, secy.

Los Angeles—Rodeo and Roundup, ausp. L. A. Natl. Horse Show, Inc., at Coliseum, Expo. Park. May 20-22. Mat Cohen, secy., Realty Board Bldg.

Hayward—Hayward Rodeo. June 21-26.

Red Bluff—Red Bluff Roundup. April 23-24. R. S. Kidder, secy., Box 598.

Salinas—Rodeo. July 20-24. Fred G. McCargon, secy.

San Jose—Great Western Roundup Assn. July 3-4. B. W. Lorigan, mgr., 19 N. First St.

Saugus—Rodeo at Baker Ranch. May 1.

Ukiah—Rodeo. July 1-4. C. M. Morgan, mgr.

Willis—Frontier Celebration, ausp. Amer. Legion. July 2-4.

COLORADO

Brush—Rodeo, ausp. Civic Club. July 2-4.

Colorado Springs—Pikes Peak Rodeo. Aug. 16-18. Russell Law, mgr., 116 N. Nevada Ave.

IDAHO

Weiser—Roundup. Sept. 22-24. J. Harris, pres.

ILLINOIS

Chicago—Rodeo in Grant Park. Aug. 20-28. Assn. of Commerce, mgrs.; Tex Austin, dir.

KANSAS

Kingman—Cattlemen's Picnic. August. A. E. Palmer, mgr.

Kiowa—Kiowa Rodeo. Aug. 10-12. Geo. C. Stevens, secy.

Protection — Rodeo and Roundup at Briggs' Ranch. July 28-30. Briggs Bros., mgrs.

Sun City—McLain's Roundup. Aug. 18-20. M. F. McLain, mgr., Box 178.

KENTUCKY

Lexington—Rodeo at Joyland Park. April 12-16. Frank P. Caldwell, mgr.

MICHIGAN

Detroit—Stampede and Rodeo. Oct. 29-Nov. 6. Alberta Stampede Co., mgrs., Calgary, Alta., Can.

MONTANA

Great Falls—Rodeo. July 2-5. Chamber of Commerce, mgr.

Livingston—Rodeo, ausp. Chamber of Commerce. July 2-4.

NEBRASKA

Alliance—American Legion Rodeo. June 22-24. John L. Wehr, mgr.

Burwell—Rodeo. Aug. 16-19. F. W. Manasil, secy.

Henry (White City)—Rodeo. July 3-5.

North Platte—Rodeo, ausp. Volunteer Firemen's Assn. July 1-3. Thos. Stebbins, mgr.

NEVADA

Winnemucca—Rodeo. Sept. 3-5 T. M. Thorsen, mgr.

NEW MEXICO

Las Vegas—Cowboys' Reunion. July 2-4. E. E. Huyck, mgr., Box 67, E. Las Vegas.

NEW YORK

Buffalo—Stampede and Rodeo. Starts June 11. Alberta Stampede Co., mgr., Calgary, Alta., Can.

OHIO

Cleveland—Rodeo in Luna Park Stadium. May 15-23.

Columbus—Stampede and Rodeo. May 28-June 5. Alberta Stampede Co., mgr., Calgary, Alta., Can.

Columbus—Texas Rangers' Rodeo. May 21-27.

OREGON

Burns—Horney County Roundup. Sept. 8-10. Joe R. Thompson.

Crawfordsville — Celebration and Roundup. July 4-5. D. F. McKercher, secy.

Pendleton—Roundup. Sept. 14-17. G. C. Baer, mgr., Box 278.

Heppner—Heppner Rodeo. September. L. L. Gilliam, secy., Box 445.

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh — Stampede and Rodeo. Starts July 2. Alberta Stampede Co., mgr., Calgary, Alta., Can.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Belle Fourche—Roundup. July 4-6.

WASHINGTON

Colfax—La La Palousar Rodeo. Sept. 22-24.

Sumas—Sumas Roundup. Sept. 3-5. A. W. Linn, mgr., Box 16.

WYOMING

Cheyenne—Frontier Days Celebration. July 26-30. Robt. D. Hanesworth, secy., Box 715.

Cody—Cody Stampede. July 4-6. S. S. Kuentzel, mgr.

Rawlins—Rawlins Rodeo. Aug. 3-5. Chamber of Commerce, mgr.

CANADA

Calgary, Alta.—Calgary Stampede. July 11-16. Guy Weadlick, mgr.

Toronto, Ont.—Stampede and Rodeo. Starts June 25. Alberta Stampede Co., mgr., Calgary, Alta, Can.

Vancouver, B. C.—Stampede and Rodeo. August. Alberta Stampede Co., mgr., Calgary, Alta., Can.

RAY HUMPHREYS, Author of "THE OLD 'YALLER' SHIRT"

HERE is a story that, for real interest and worth, can be equalled, but not surpassed. It should bring tears to the eyes of the gayest of clowns, and it should make the saddest of dyspeptics twitch with laughter. It has in it all of the humor and the pathos of the living West, yet it is crowded with the sort of action that has made the Western theme a widely read one. Ray Humphreys is the only man who could have written this story; and what is more, no one can ask that it be better done. We think that this story is a real find, and we are sure that our readers will look forward to more of Humphreys' yarns in future issues of "Cowboy Stories."

GLENN A. CONNOR, Author of "WHEN COWBOYS RIDE"

THIS author needs no introduction to regular "Cowboy Stories" readers. He has delighted them by the thousands with his yarns of real cowboy life on the ranches and ranges. He has written about Westerners and their horses. (He is a real cowboy himself, mind you.) He has told of thrilling adventures that only cowpunchers of the genuine sort can have. He has plumbed the depths of rangeland souls and told why it is that so much glorious action results when men of the plains fight for or against each other. But he has never written a finer or truer account of Western life than this one. It is packed with the action and happenings that thrill. It throbs with the emotional tremor of real life. It is Connor's best tribute to his knowledge and love of things Western.

FRANCIS W. HILTON, Author of "THE FLASH RIDER"

WHEN we introduced Francis W. Hilton to our readers in the July issue of "Cowboy Stories" with his story, "The Wampus Cat," we once again gave our readers an author who can really write of the life he knows so well. Nuf sed, so far. But that is only the beginning. Right after we decided to publish "The Wampus Cat," we immediately asked Hilton for another story. We knew what would happen; it has. We have received hundreds of letters from our readers, telling us how much they liked Francis W. Hilton, and saying that they wanted to read more of his stuff. We were prepared for just this, and so we are able to give our readers "The Flash Rider" in this issue. There is no use telling much more about Francis W. Hilton; once you have read his story in this issue, you will know, better than anyone can tell you, that he is another one of the high-heeled tribe who is gifted with the great ability to entertain thousands of people by writing about what he knows from having lived it.

FROM OUR READERS

(Letters of Opinion and Comment)

ONE OF HUNDREDS

Dear Editor:

Just tell Mr. Glenn A. Connor to keep up the stories he sends in, and I believe there are hundreds just like me that wish to read more of them.

Respectfully,
M. ARTHUR.

979 E. Julian St., San Jose, Calif.

NONE CAN COMPARE

Dear Editor:

I have read many good books, but have never read any to compare with "Cowboy Stories." I have been reading them a year and will read them as long as I can get them. Why not put them out twice-a-month?

Sincerely yours,
JACK PARSONS.

499 5th Ave., New Rochelle, N. Y.

WILL READ EVERY COPY

Dear Editor:

I am sending in my first ballot on the three authors that I believe should get first prize. Also I want to express my thanks to you for putting out such a wonderful magazine as "Cowboy Stories." It is the first one that I have ever read, but I want to assure you that I will read every copy that comes out.

Yours truly,
LOUIS RAINERO.

Oakland, Calif.

ALL GOOD, SOME BETTER

Dear Editor:

Just a line of appreciation for "Cowboy Stories." If you only knew how they are devoured over here you would feel gratified, if not flattered. I notice on one of the rear pages you ask the readers to express their likes and dislikes on a coupon and sent it in. Now I don't wish to argue, but all the stories are good and some better. So long as you serve action, motivation, as it was enacted in real in the "Wild and Woolly" you needn't worry none 'bout not being popular. I've always been keen on seeing the West written up as it actually is. One seems to get the tang of the chuck-wagon coffee and the yells of the roundup cows in all the stories. I got to roving a while myself. I'm 26 years old. One day a manager of a boxing stable imagined he saw in me championship material until a half a dozen fights convinced me I'd never be a remarkable exponent in the manly art of assault and

battery. It's a great game, though, if it's on the level. Next, I'm playing football. But now, Mr. Editor, you'll be getting as peeved as a steer in a log-hole, so I'll wish you, the mag, and all the "Hitchin'-Rack" all the best, and while I'm rambling around, I'll read the "Cowboy" and dream of "auld lang syne."

Yours very truly,
RAYMOND ELLIOTT.

48 Union St., Hamilton, Scotland.

A CRITICISM IN VERSE—IT DOESN'T APPLY TO US

Dear Editor:

Inclosed is a little rhyme or poetry, and the author is too bashful to admit ownership. So, if you can use it, by revising punctuation, it is yours to print.

Sincerely yours,
A. C.

Providence, R. I.

BACKWARD TURN BACKWARD

Backward, turn backward, you film-makin' guys in your flight,
An' put on a puncher who'll do the game right.
Put on a picture that won't seem so strange
To all the old punchers who've ridden the range.

Don't picture the daughter the old gent loves best,
Skippin' with some hard-ridden Son of the West.
Backward turn backward 'til folks get a clue
Of some of the things a cowboy won't do.

Show me a cowboy with no more to do;
Than merely to ride a bronco or two—
Picture 'em a-lopin' away in the rain,
A-roundin' up cows, on a mud-splattered plain.

Picture him as he really appears.
Backward turn backward so people can see
That his job ain't all it's cracked up to be.

Show me a cowboy whose job is above!
Close herdin' damsels, or fallin' in love.
Make him appear in a far different light
Than hangin' around a saloon half the night.
Picture him cuttin' out steers from the bunch
An' not with some girl at a picnic or lunch,
Backward turn backward, so people will know
Exactly how things on a cattle ranch go.

Backward, turn backward, you actors, who try
To mimic a callin' that's merely gone by.
Pull off those "chaps," those guns an' spurs,
An' get a real cowboy to tell what occurs.
Get him to tell of long years in the West,
Of storms, stampedes, poor grub and the rest.
An' when you've listened, tug out your machine
An' picture a cowboy just as he is seen.

THE COWBOY QUEEN

Dear Editor:

I have some news that might interest you. Thanks to Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Crawford, for because of them I have won the title "The Cowboy Queen."

Last week I went to a party which at the beginning was gay, but the end started wrong. Some started jokes, and telling stories soon started. Everyone had to tell a story from magazines they read. We did. I told Mr. MacDonald's "Flaming Dead" and they asked for another. I then told them Mr. Crawford's ballad, "The Killer." They said I was the winner, and asked about the magazine. They then named me "The Cowboy Queen," and said they would never stop reading it. Isn't that grand? I received many gifts, but the best of all is a large bookcase with "The Cowboy Stories" printed on the glass; also my name. I must close now, but I want some more of Mr. Crawford's ballads and Mr. MacDonald's stories. Three cheers for the editor of "Cowboy Stories." May he live long and write more.

Yours respectfully,
THE COWBOY QUEEN.
(Miss Mildred Grimshaw.)

609 Sawyer Ave., Tonawanda, N. Y.

GREAT

Dear Editor:

I was very pleased when the postman brought your kind letter to me. It makes me feel that I have not said enough for your magazine, as indeed I haven't. I could never say enough for "Cowboy Stories." They are simply great. I also read "Ace-High" and enjoy it very much.

My favorite author is Charles Francis Coe, while close behind him comes H. Bedford-Jones, Scott Hauter, J. Irving Crump, and James French Dorrance, and a host of other Western writers. They are all good.

You say you would like suggestions on how to make your magazine better. Well, I'm here to tell you that you don't need all the suggestions in the world, for I don't believe "Cowboy Stories" could be made any better unless it was published twice-a-month. Maybe it is better as it is, for we readers might not appreciate your wonderful magazine so much if we got it oftener.

Sincerely yours,
MISS ALMA OFFUTT.

Lebanon, Mo.

WONDERFUL MAGAZINE

Dear Editor:

It's been a long time since I stopped here at the "Hitchin'-Rack." I want to thank you for printing my letter. I have made oodles of friends through your wonderful magazine.

"Nevada's Daughter," by Ralph Cummins, was a dandy story. I have the "Ranch Romances" first Feb. issue, "Cowboy Stories," Jan. issue, and the late "Ace-High." I read first one and then another. Those three are my best pals. They help me pass the long hours away. These love story magazines make me sick. Give me the good old C. S. and R. R. There isn't anything mushy or rough about them. The whole Clark family reads your wonderful magazines, the C. S. and R. R.

The C. S. and R. R. are getting better and better. You surely have corralled a lot of good writers, ones that know their stuff.

Wishing C. S. and R. R. a world of luck, I remain a true friend.

JESSIE CLARK.

Elam, Ore.

* * *

THE MAIL BAG

(The Corresponding Club)

INTERESTED

Dear Editor:

I am very much interested in the "Cowboy Stories" and have been reading the "Hitchin'-Rack" for some time. I thought I would try my luck to get to correspond with some one. I am a working girl and I read "Cowboy Stories" to pass the evenings away and would be glad to correspond with some cowboys, ranchers or rangers from along the Mexico border. I will send you a description of myself. I am 24 years of age, have brown hair, blue eyes and light complexion, weight 98 lbs., 5 ft. 3 in. tall. Will be glad to exchange snapshots. Now remember, I am waiting for lots of pen pals.

A constant reader,
MAE McCOMAS.

Box 511, Brokenbow, Neb.

BEST EVER

Dear Editor:

I have been reading "Cowboy Stories" a long time and I think they are the best I ever read.

I would like to hear from all over the United States, and as I live in Texas I can give some information about this state.

Cowboys and cowgirls or just plain boys and girls between 18 and 25 preferred. I'm 18.

MISS VIRGINIA BUTTRELL.

Box 693, Jayton, Texas.

THE BEST

Dear Editor:

Enclosed please find my ballot for the authors that I think should receive some of the cash prizes. I sure hope they all get a share of it. I am a regular reader of the "Cowboy Stories" and "Ace-High Magazine."

I think they are the best, as I have read most of the Western magazines and have cut down to these two. Now, if you know of anyone wanting a good pen pal, tell them to write me as I sure can tell them a heap myself. Now, you can put any of my letters in your magazine and you have my permission to say anything you like, as I can't say half enough to praise up your magazine and your splendid authors. I beg to remain,

Yours very truly,
SILENT JACK.
875 Milverton Blvd., Toronto 6, Ontario, Canada.

GREAT

Dear Editor:

I have been reading your mag. for some time and think it's great. I think G. A. Connor and J. I. Crump are your best authors.

I would like to correspond with some boys and girls about my age and exchange photos. I will try and give my description. I am 18, dark hair and blue eyes, ready for a hot time. Come on girls, don't be bashful.

I have had some ranching experience. Have worked on ranches 5 years of my life.

Yours till the end,
EMMETT S. REEDER.
Box 232, Eureka, Kans.

WANTS TO CORRESPOND

Dear Editor:

Hello pals! Move over there now! Let me tie Buck (my pony) a minute to see what you have to say. Yes, I'm a reader of the "Cowboy Stories" an' always want to be. Would like to hear from cowboys an' cowgirls from all over. Come on now, don't be afraid, I'll try to answer all. I'm 15 years too old, havin' brown hair an' eyes. Between two and six feet long. Good looking? Well, I don't know. Now don't hesitate, cowboys an' cowgirls, to fill my mail box.

Sincerely,
(MISS) LORNA YOST.
R. 1, Bozeman, Mont.

CANNOT BE BEAT

Dear Editor:

I have been reading "Cowboy Stories" for a long while and think that they cannot be beat.

The story that I liked best in the April magazine was "One Year After," by J. R. Johnsten.

It showed that the old man could be fooled some times.

I would like to hear from some real cowboys and girls. I will answer all letters.

I am 18 years old, 5 ft. 11 in., and weigh 156 lbs. Well, I will hit the wind and see if I can rope another cowboy story.

Yours truly,
R. R. 1, Derby, Iowa. *EARL ROBERTS.*

ENJOYED IT VERY MUCH

Dear Editor:

Just finished my first copy of "Cowboy Stories" and enjoyed it very much. I love to read about ranch and range life, so would like to correspond with real cowboys and cowgirls.

Here's hoping and wishing success to your magazine. I remain,

Yours truly,
JULIA F. OSZAICA.
18 Park St., Central Falls, R. I.
P. S.—I am 17 years old.

BEATS THEM ALL

Dear Editor:

I read my first copy of "Cowboy Stories" last month and I could hardly wait a whole month for the next issue, but I did, and it is even better than last month's. That's the only fault I can find with your magazine: you ought to publish it every week—or at least every two weeks. I sure won't miss any of them after this if I can help it. I have read several other Western magazines, but "Cowboy Stories" beats them all.

And Editor, I would like to join your "Hitchin'-Rack," if there is room for me. I would like to hear from some young cowboys—and girls, too, for that matter—and I promise to answer all letters. I am 17 years old, tall and slender, have dark brown hair, brown eyes, and fair complexion.

Well, I will close now, wishing you and your "Cowboy Stories" the best of luck, and hoping to hear from a cowboy or cowgirl soon.

Sincerely,
MYRTLE JOHNSON.
411 Wabash, Kansas City, Mo.

LOVES HORSES

Dear Editor:

I have just finished reading your most wonderful magazine and certainly appreciate the stories you have published up to date, for they certainly cheer a fellow up a lot when he has nothing else to do and is feeling blue. I love the stories that you have published since December, especially "Ridin' Revenge," and "Ivory, Horse of Horses." I wished you would send more of the same style in your next issue as I love horses. I'm in the Artillery at Madison Barracks and we ride every day. We have a pretty bunch of horses, but I guess none are like the ones that are in the West. Would some one of the West, or anyone that reads this, please write to a lonely fellow?

Here's hoping "Cowboy Stories" will continue to lead them all!

E. ATKINS.
Batt. D-7, F. A., Madison Barracks, N. Y.

MORE INTERESTING THAN ANY

Dear Editor:

Just finished my first copy of "Cowboy Stories" and enjoyed reading it very much. Can't say which story was best, as they were all very good.

I love to read about real cowboys and cowgirls. I have found this book more interesting than any book I ever read.

I would like very much to correspond with some of your real cowboys and cowgirls, boys especially.

Hoping all success to the "Cowboy Stories,"
Schulter, Okla. *VIOLA HAMILTON.*

IT IS GREAT

Dear Editor:

Just finished reading my last issue of "Cowboy Stories" and think it is great.

Listen to me a little bit. I want pen pals and I have brown eyes and dark hair, will that do?

I will answer all I can, so come along, folks, either sex.

Yours truly,
MISS MELBA LEIHGEBER.
Box 48, North Bend, Ohio.

LONGS TO GO WEST

Dear Editor:

I started to read "Cowboy Stories" and find them very interesting. I am 15 years of age and was born on a farm. I have light hair and blue eyes. My height is 5 feet 2. I have always longed to go out West. Hoping that some day I can. I am the best rider and roper in our neighborhood.

I want to correspond with some real cowboy.

Yours truly,
JOE C. (CHIP) POLAKOSKI.
So. St. Paul, Minn.

MARVELOUS

Dear Editor:

I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate your book. It is just marvelous! I am always sure of a good hearty laugh when I see a story of the Windowsash boys, and I gasp for breath when I read your serials. The beginning of "The Man From Medicine Lodge" is almighty interesting and I sure am waiting for the next issue. I have been reading your stories for three months, but if you keep on issuing such glorious stories it will be three years and as long as I live.

I live way over on the Western coast and it gets pretty lonesome in town if you don't hear from outsiders, so if you please, folks, I would like some letters and will answer in return.

(GEE) JEANETTE VELZION.
214 S. Gabilan St., Salinas, Calif.

NOT GOING TO STOP

Dear Editor:

I have just started to read the "Cowboy Stories" and don't think for one minute I'm going to stop, because I'm not! The best story that I have read so far is "Halliday of the Hungry Loop." What I really came for is to have some correspondence with "real" cowboys and girls. I get very lonesome and so I am depending on getting lots and lots of letters from the West. You can also count me in on the "Hitchin'-Rack." I want to be one of the "gang." Now, cowboys and girls, don't you dare to forget to write. With oceans and oceans of hope for the success of the "Cowboy Stories" and for the editor,

Yours,
(MISS) DOROTHY COHOON.
R. D. No. 4, Binghamton, N. Y.

The Stone Wall

(COWBOY STORIES receives from its readers so many letters of congratulation and compliment that it is impossible, because of the lack of space for us to publish all of them. Many of these letters also express a desire to correspond. We have always been impartial each month in choosing the ones we published.

From time to time we become confronted with a problem. It is like running into a stone wall. We must do something about it, or we would not be as fair to our readers as we always want to be. And so we have added this department to The Hitchin'-Rack. In it will be published only the names and addresses of some of those who wrote us and who want to correspond. This department will appear whenever the letters get to be so many that most of them would be practically lost, awaiting their turn for publication. This department will assure each reader who wants to correspond that there is no chance of his or her wishes remaining unknown for a very long time. We trust that our readers will understand that we are now, as always, doing our best to please.)

LEO WALK and JAMES YOUNG, Glasgow, Ill.
LALA BAILEY, Box 102, Four Mile, Ky.
C. VERNON MOULDEN, Box 505, Uniontown, Pa.
MISS GRACE SMITH, 109 Canwick Road, Lincoln, England.
LEAH JARVIS, Box 167, Douthat, Okla.
JACOBINE HALVORSON, Lone Pine Farm, Burbank, S. D.
MONA BENNETT, Box 114, Lady Lake, Fla.
RITA MULLIGAN, Box 26, Chelsea, New York.
H. M. J., Indian School, Pipestone, Minn.
M. S., Ind. Boarding School, Pipestone, Minn.
VINCENT L. GREEN, 2996 E. 61st St., Cleveland, O.
ERIC BASS, 19 Higham Road, Bucks, England.
BOBBY FAY, 1484 Emma St., Des Plains, Ill.
MISS V. M. WATSON, Route 1, Wenatchee, Wash.
JOHN ANDERSON, 236 Market St., Brighton, Mass.
VIRGINIA SNYDER, 3634 Third St., San Diego, Calif.
GEORGE FORTNER, Lonnie Chipps, Masontown, W. Va.
ROGERS E. STEELE, Everett, Pa.
WESLEY CLARK, c/o Horsman Ranch, Coulterville, Calif.
MISS PINKY SMITH, 11 Djer St., So. Portland, Me.
C. FREDERICK DUNOW, 511 Iowa Ave., Co. Bluffs, Iowa.
ALDO CORDA, R. 3, Box 17, Petoluma, Calif.
MR. W. F. DILLON, 7th Division, U. S. S. "Mississippi," c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.
GEORGE CALLAHAN, 2315 16th St., Gulfport, Miss., c/o Pat Shane.
NEWELL SANDERS, Veterans' Hospital 100, Battle Creek, Mich.
WILLIAM J. WILLIS, c/o Brokley Lodge, New Milton, Hampshire, England.
HARRY PERY, 1750 Weeks Ave., New York, N. Y.
MISS PAULINE BURKE, 2618½ S. Rob., Oklahoma City, Okla.
CHESTER L. GROVE, U. S. S. "Hatfield," c/o Postmaster, New York City.
R. F. PALLETT, 26 East Road, Stratford, Herts, Eng.
WILLIAM S. BELLOWS, Caixa 5771, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, S. A.
EVELYN D. CAIN, 17 Colorado, Detroit, Mich.
GENEVA BOVAN, Rising Sun, Ind.
ROCHELL BENFIELD, 563 Chestnut St., Kannapolis, N. C.
CLARENCE GERO, Weeks Mills, Me.
CATHERINE HOOD, 1417 Kennon St., Charlotte, N. C.
RICHARD L. FENNO, R. 1, Lynden, Wash.
EVELYN "MICKEY" McDONAGH, 185 Chambers Ave., Toronto, Canada.
SAMUEL EVANS, Penrhiw, Risca, Mon., South Wales, England.
ELENORE ARRAS, 3751 French Ave., St. Louis, Mo.
MARY CATHERINE DOLAN, General Delivery, Washington, D. C.
ANDREW F. COX, 818 14th St., Merced, Calif.
NELLIE HANLEY, 73 Britticina Road, Milnsbridge, Nr. Huddersfield, Yorkshire, England.
EDNA T. POWERS, 622 N. Adams St., Ypsilante, Mich.
BILLIE STEELE, 67 May Ave., Washington, Pa.
MICKEY CAMERON and WILLARD ROCKMAN, Shelby, Mont.
LOUISE PORTEN, R. F. D. 2, Box 56, Concord, N. C.
TOM COPPLE, 222 Decker St., Santa Rosa, Calif.
CARL HANSEN, 144 Watson St., Buffalo, N. Y.
LAWRENCE FERNELL, Slicksville, Pa.
PVT. HOLLIE H. KEERAN, Co. E 15, Parris Island, S. C.
J. CHRISTENSEN, Saxtophsvij 8, Copenhagen, Denmark.
ELIZA GOUGH, 41 Suey Avenue, Shiregreen, Sheffield, Yorkshire, England.
BERT CRECELUS, Box 155, Marfa, Texas.
MISSES ALLIE and ELMO IVIE, Box 321, Hailey, Idaho.
CLARIE SPECK, Brice, Texas.
TRESCIE ANTLE, Glace Bay, General Delivery, Cape Brition, N. S.
IRIS THOMSON, 151 Stateford Rd., Edinburgh, Scotland.
ARTHUR L. MARTIN, Glenada Station, Co. St. Maurice, P. Que., Canada.
CARL LABACH, 2427 Van Brunt Blvd., Kansas City, Mo.
IRMA THURSTON, 1655 Townsend Ave., N. Y. City.
CHARLES McCLURE, Box 15, Santee, Calif.
ALLIE LONGSTON, Box 355, Williamina, Ore.
GEORGE DEWYEE, Burlington Jct., Mo.
CHARLES BURTE, Fremont, Mich.
WILLIAM J. GLASEL, 13 & Euclid Aves., Milwaukee, Wis.
HERBERT BIETTNER, R. 1, Box 4, Carrothers, O.
FRANK MARIE, Saunders Road & Walthers Ave., Glenview, Ill.
FLO MIZE, General Delivery, Kenaston, Sask., Can.
RUSSELL JOHNSON, R. 2, Morris, Okla.
GEORGE LENHANT, R. 1, Box 24, Windsor, Colo.
BOB BURNS, Box 58, Franklin, Mich.
WILLIAM LESCANTY, 810 W. Madison St., Chicago, Ill.
HOWARD COLE, R. F. D. 2, Landenberg, Pa.
WILLIAM F. JENKEL, R. 2, Ellicottville, N. Y.
GEORGE L. GRAY, R. F. D. 8, Midland, Mich.
HOWARD M. UNDERWOOD, Ft. Hall, Idaho.
CARL A. TAYLOR, Pendleton Co., Brandywine, W. Va.
RUSSELL KEA, R. 6, Rocky Mount, N. C.
PVT. JAMES R. QUEEN, U. S. Navy Yard, Fire Dept., Philadelphia, Pa.
JOE PATE, Otego, Kans.
HAROLD MORGAN, Box 592, Winter Haven, Fla.
EVELYN A. BAKER, R. F. D. 2, Box 49, West Glens Falls, N. Y.
MARY C. DOLAN, General Delivery, Washington, D. C.
ANNIE CHANDLER, R. 1, Box 87, Drew, Miss.
EDWARD ASHBRIDGE, Hotel Kitchener, Regina, Sask., Canada.
MARJORIE JENNINGS, Box 23, Dellvale, Kans.
KATHERINE SCHRIER, 80 Reed Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.
J. F. MATTHEWS, 505 Pine St., Williamsport, Pa.
R. BELLEHUMEUR, 10521 101st St., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
MABEL SEARS, Wren, Ore.
A. BOYLE, 26 Woodland Cresc., Falkirk, Scotland.
TED PERRYMAN, R. 3, Box 61, Carter, Okla.
BOB MEACHAM, Port Althorp, Alaska, via Juneau.
WAYNE FLANAGAN, 608 1st Ave., W., Newton, Ia.
ALMA OFFUTT, R. 1, Lebanon, Ore.
JOSEPH FOOMATH, 1604 Queen St., E., Toronto, Ont., Canada.
JOSEPHINE MARUSZECZKE, Box 39, Holden, Alta., Canada.
LOTTIE SOARE, Box 273, Stilwell, Okla.
ALICE RITTER, General Delivery, Stilwell, Okla.
FRANK J. PAGE, 1028 Laura St., Elizabeth, N. J.
ELIZABETH MATHES, R. 4, Box 51, Clinton, Ind.
ERVIN DENNIS, Star Route, Putnam, Texas.
CLETA WEAVER, R. R. 6, Wichita, Kans.
R. RALPH BARKER, Mooresville, N. C.
ROBERT VERNON, 220 Upper Parliament St., Liverpool, England.
LENA LEWIS, 320 7th Ave., Three Rivers, Mich.
HOWARD DICKSON, Douglas, Wyo.
EULAH DUNCAN, Plato Star Route, Lebanon, Mo.
MILDRED ALBERT, General Delivery, Milwaukee, Wis.
ETHEL WILLIS, Jordan, Ky.
PVT. CECIL J. BOYD, Fire Dept., Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pa., U. S. M. C.

MAJOR G. W. LILLIE (PAWNEE BILL) RIDING HIS FAVORITE HORSE

PAWNEE BILL'S
Question and Answer Box

THIS department is conducted by the world famous Major G. W. Lillie (Pawnee Bill), noted Indian chief, trapper, hunter, and rancher. He has consented to answer questions concerning the *real West*. All communications must be addressed to Pawnee Bill, c/o COWBOY STORIES, 799 Broadway, New York City. Questions will be submitted to Pawnee Bill. He will answer them in the order of their receipt. His answers will be published in this department in the order of their acceptance as rapidly as space permits. Letters of inquiry should be brief and to the point. Questions must not express more than a desire for information about the West and the people who live there.

1. *(a) Where can you find bears most plentiful? (b) Where are the wildest places in the West?—Hunter Furches, Jr., Ooltewah, Tenn.*

Ans. (a) Bears are found in the Rocky Mountain sections of the United States. (b) In the northern part of Montana and parts of Arizona. These parts are very wild yet.

2. *Did you know Billy the Kid?—C. P. Vittitow, De Witt, Ark.*

Ans. No. I did not know Billy the Kid. He lived in New Mexico, 700 miles from where I lived.

3. *Please tell me if cowboys still wear guns, and do they still have cattle rustlers in the West?*

Ans. Yes, the cowboys still wear guns on the big ranches. And there are cattle rustlers on the cattle ranges and will always be as long as cattle ranches exist.

4. *Did you ever come in contact with Buffalo Bill or Broncho Billie, and what were their real names? —A Reader, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

Ans. Yes. Buffalo Bill was christened W. F. Cody. Broncho Billy's christened name was Wm. Anderson.

5. *I am an old puncher from the old Indian territory and an old trail driver. Was born and raised on the Chikaskia River. I wonder if you could tell me what became of Jim Bebb or Lew Wright who joined your show in the later '80's. They were old side-kicks of mine.—C. N. (Nick) Coker, La Jara, Colorado.*

Ans. Jim Bebb is in New Mexico. Bob Bebb is at Enid, c/o Sheriff's Office, Enid, Okla. I remember Lew Wright, but I do not know what became of him.

6. *(a) Where is the grave of Buffalo Bill? (b) When did he die? (c) Did Buffalo Bill ever guide Gen. Custer? (d) Who were the guides on the "Little Big Horn" when Gen. Custer made his last stand? (e) How did Calamity Jane meet her death and where is she buried? (f) What tribe of Indians was she friendly with?—Albert Bartik, Box 138, Saratoga Springs, N. Y.*

Ans. (a) Buffalo Bill's grave is on Look Out Mountain near Denver, Colo. (b) Col. W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) died at the home of his sister, Mrs. Lew Decker, in the fall of 1917. (c) Col. Cody was a guide and scout under Gen. Custer, but was not with him at the time of the Custer Battle. (d) "Curley," the Crow Indian scout, was with Gen. Custer at the Little Big Horn but escaped in disguise by wrapping about him the blanket of a slain Indian. He was the only one to escape. (e) Calamity Jane died a natural death. She is buried in the cemetery at Deadwood, S. Dak., on the same lot with Wild Bill Hickok. (f) She was friendly with the Northern Cheyennes and the Sioux Indians.

7. *Can you give me any information where a man can get a job to learn to ride bucking horses and roping cattle so I can be a rodeo rider?—H. J. Roger, 3904 Halldale Ave., Lose Angeles, Calif.*

Ans. First, it would be necessary for you to practice throwing a lasso. Second, you must learn to be a good horseman. Third, then write to some of the big cattle ranchers in the West.

8. *(a) Please send me the words of the piece, "The Dying Cowboy." (b) Have you known a horse that was in the rodeos that could not be rode?—John Badman, Collegeville, Pa.*

Ans. (a) Write to W. E. Hawks, Bennington, Vt. He gets out a book of all the cowboy songs, including "The Dying Cowboy." (b) I have never heard of a horse that could not be ridden. There were several buckers that built quite a reputation at the Western rodeos for throwing our best cowboy riders; but all of them were eventually ridden.

9. *(a) Please tell me whether the Government furnishes a ranger with necessary equipment such as firearms, horses, saddles, etc. (b) Are appointments made soon after a forest ranger's application is filed, or does it take a great length of time?—R. Gordon, Springfield, Ohio.*

Ans. (a) The Government furnishes the forest ranger all of his equipment, including his living quarters. (b) In reference to the application, write to Commissioner of Forestry, Forest Ranger Department, Washington, D. C.

10. *What is the Comanche Indian war cry?—Lee Buster, Bismarck, Mo.*

Ans. The war cry of all Indians is alike. It is very shrill and loud and carries a great distance.

The Swappers' Exchange

A Department where you can exchange something you don't want for something you would like to have

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Write out your announcement carefully, either hand-print it or typewrite it, and send it, together with slip at bottom of this page, to THE SWAPPERS' EXCHANGE, *care of* COWBOY STORIES, *Room* 610, 799 *Broadway, New York City. Announcements are limited to* 21 *words, and only bona fide exchanges will be published. Announcements of articles listed for sale are not admitted to this department. In voluntary cooperation with the national law forbidding the mailing of firearms capable of being concealed on the person, we do not publish trades of such firearms.*

Your name and address must accompany each announcement when published.

It is understood that COWBOY STORIES *cannot be held responsible for any losses sustained by our readers. Do not send money to strangers.*

Your announcement will be inserted free of charge in one issue only.

Have three-tube radio, good order. Want incubator in good order, or Rhode Island reds or baby chicks. A. J. Bill, 194 Lexington Ave., Jersey City, N. J.

Have .22 automatic Winchester rifle, excellent condition. Want typewriter. Chas Richter, 90-15 Street, Milwaukee, Wis.

Have volley ball, flashlight, fishing outfit. What have you? Paul McDowell, Kennerdell, Pa.

Have 40 acres of land in Missouri to swap. What have you? John J. Carroll, 240 N. Oakdale Street, Salina, Kansas.

Have portable Corona typewriter, stamp collection, books, puttees. Want tools, forge, or? William Hynek, Park River, N. Dak.

Have magazines. Will trade for other magazines, or? Alfred Smith, 221-15 133rd Avenue, Springfield, L. I., N. Y.

New Steber highspeed knitter, cabinet and yarn, cost $75.00. What have you? James A. Hayden, 11 Christian Street, Waniford, Conn.

Trade Tyson on Practice of Medicine; Gray's Anatomy, 7 vols. For radio or portable typewriter. J. W. Hale, Devol, Okla.

Will trade 30 cal. Springfield repeating rifle for .25-.20, .32-.20, or .44-.40 repeater. Sam Giebner, R. D. 21, Stoneboro, Pa.

Will trade Gearhardt knitting machine, good condition, for typewriter or clarinet. Arthur Cartwright, National, Wash.

Want poems of all kinds. What do you want? Sergeant John J. Drulis, The Army War College Detachment, Washington, D. C.

Want tabloid picture papers, daily or Sunday; magazines. C. McHead, Box 80, Glace Bay, N. S., Canada.

Want .22 repeating rifle. Have over 70 books by well known authors. W. A. Butler, 1374 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Have small flashlight, 50 novels, bamboo fishing rod, reel. Want book of registered brands, old books, or? Howard Shouffler, Morgantown, W. Va.

Will exchange magazines for other magazines, stamps, or? Fred Heil, 61 Allen Street, Dayton, Ohio.

Have books, magazines, army haversack, new. What have you? John Ryan, 33 Plunkett Street, Pittsfield, Mass.

Have bamboo fly rod, automatic reel, Audel's engineers and mechanics guides. Want 20 gauge pump, or chaps. Darwin Adams, Promontory, Utah.

Have 40 acres in Lake County, Mich. Want kodak, field glasses, jewelry, or? A. Rutherford, 1308 W. Leonard Street, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Have .38 Marlin repeating rifle, old stamps, coins, cameras. Want? Jos. Allen, Ligonier, Pa.

Have books, flashlights, steel traps, boxing gloves, knives, Erector, air rifle. Want anything useful. Everett Crummy, Box 78, Etna, Pa.

Have 175 magazines. Want typewriter, or? Thomas Dower, 164 Schuylkill Avenue, Shen Heights, Shenandoah, Pa.

Have radio and electrical parts, stamps, Erector, etc. Want Ford balloon tires, auto parts, mimeograph, or? Robert Denmark, 139 Harrison Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Have a real moving picture machine. Will trade for what have you? Lowell Richardson, Box 364, Poplar Bluff, Mo.

Have embroidered scarf, pillow cases, aprons, luncheon sets. Want BB gun, boy's shoes, size 2, or? Mrs. Mae Page, 449 N. Chatham St., Janesville, Wis.

Have $75.00 worth of novelties. Want cameras, typewriters, or anything else. C. Holman, Downsville, La.

Have ukulele, parts for model airplane. Want typewriter, field glasses, or? William Ball, Maynard Avenue, Seekonk, Mass.

Have trap drum outfit to trade for chickens or anything. Floyd Woyame, 1531 N. Mead Street, Wichita, Kansas.

Have field glasses, auto horn, fly rod. Want sporting goods. Bernard Bliss, 7228 Summit Street, Kansas City, Mo.

Tear this slip off and mail it with your announcement—it entitles you to *one* free insertion in this Department. Announcements are limited to 21 words, including name and address—trades only—no others considered. Announcements must be either typed or hand-printed.

Name .....

Street .....

City .....

(Void after August 20, 1927.)

Have complete McKnown system of real estate. What have you? George Parker, Marathon, N. Y.

Will trade Boston newspapers for others. Max Gans, 85 Chester Avenue, Chelsea, Mass.

Have two U. S. gold dollars, ear rings, field glasses, bugle, spark coils, motor boat. Want? George Brown, Water and Sycamore Sts., Terre Haute, Ind.

Have 65 different magazines. Will trade for camera, printing set, or lefthanded baseball glove. Joseph Moffit, 40 Oak Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Have double-barreled shotgun and American pedometer to trade for fishing reel and rod, or? Frank Violet, Walton, Ky.

Have Hollywood moving picture machine, Hamilton .22 rifle. Want 1-tube radio set complete. Steve Wisloskie, 1064 Spruce St., Kulpmont, Pa.

Have 20 gauge Crescent shotgun, new; one bicycle. Want police pup, or? Gilmer Hargrave, 401 Cleveland Avenue, Winston Salem, N. C.

Have Atwater-Kent ignition system, ukulele, Ford spark coils, books, magazines, etc. What have you? Louis Laurent, Box 141, Chatsworth, Illinois.

Have white collie pups with red spot on head. Want bicycle, or? Raymond McLin, c. o. Star Garage, Sabina, Ohio.

Have books, water-paints, skates. Want cowboy or Indian things, or? Joseph Loder, R. F. D. No. 1, Box 135, Pleasantville, N. J.

Have Triplex autoknitter to trade for radio or poultry, or? Francis T. Culdice, Lyons, Ill.

Have Conn B-flat tenor saxophone, gold bell, silver plated, in case. Want radio or high-grade tenor or 5-string banjo. Sidney Mayle, Box 332, Pursglove, W. Va.

Have radio supplies and banjo. What have you? Otto N. Goetzinger, Dyersville, Iowa.

Have beginners telegraph set, .22 rifle. Want guitar. J. B. Rightmer, Box 69, Flatonia, Texas.

Have auto engineering books. Want radio parts, or? John Hartzell, Reno, Pa.

Have new tapaderos, 22 in. Want silver mounted spurs worth $12.00, or? Dick Jenson, Mound City, S. Dak.

Have 100 magazines; good condition, value over $13.00. Want typewriter or printing supplies. Samuel Levin, 3359 Beach Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Want to trade newspapers from your town for newspapers from Scranton. Joseph R. Dempsey, 1701 Quincy Avenue, Scranton, Pa.

Have Ford rear end complete, set of coils and parts for 1919 Maxwell. Want radio, or? Frank Mosher, Box 59, Norfolk, N. Y.

Will trade complete vulcanizing outfit, worth $4.00, for anything of equal value. Eilert Harfst, Box 396, Havana, Ill.

Have bicycle, office desk. What have you? Bethel Coleman, Shelbiana, Ky.

Have motorcycles, radio and parts, coins, stamps. Want? What have you? Ernest W. Chilson, 22 Lincoln Ave., Takoma Park, D. C.

Have 5-tube complete neutrodyne radio. Want .30-.30 rifle and .22 repeater, or? Dick Christel, 802 West Oak, Denton, Texas.

Have Strongfort health course. Want MacMahon or Atlas courses. Joseph McSparrow, 5718 Crittenden St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Want typewriter, U. S. profit-sharing coupons. Your list for mine. L. H. Galehouse, 527 E. Ave., Elyria, Ohio.

Want prints of Western paintings by C. M. Russell. What do you want? M. Arthur, 979 E. Julian St., San Jose, Calif.

Will trade half interest in my song to anyone who will write the music for same. Write for details. Edward Zweiberth, 1303 Shenandoah Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Have Hawaiian guitar and course. Will trade for radio, or? Amos W. Gainey, U. S. C. G., Pensacola, Fla.

Have Western books and magazines, hunting knife. Want cowboy boots, cuffs, or? Frank Zahradnick, Box 136, Phillips, Wis.

Want course in hypnotism or radio. Have radio and camera. Write. Frank Garland, Box 278, Wolfeboro, N. H.

Have foreign stamps. Want Indian arrowheads. W. G. Sparks, Box 112, Marlin, Texas.

Have complete $75.00 course in Salesmanship. Want rifles, or? E. E. Piper, Kelly Brook Farm, R. F. D. 1, Oconto Falls, Wisc.

Have automobile engineering books (6 volumes). Wish to trade rifle, would prefer .30-.30 or .32 special. G. Rogers, 131 E. 3rd No., Price, Utah.

Have oldest Zither of the world. What have you? Joe Richter, R. F. D. 2, Box 129, Ladysmith, Wis.

Have Conn B-flat tenor saxophone, silver plated, gold bell, in case. Want auto or motorcycle, value $75.00. Sidney Mayle, Pursglove, W. Va.

Have 480 acre horse-ranch, good grass, plenty water, good market. Want late model Dodge car. G. G. Henderson, R. 1, Box 138, Prosser, Wash.

Have .45-.70 rifle, Earle E. Liederman's course, 250 pound barbell, boxing gloves. What have you? Ervin LeRoux, Hugo, Minn.

Have books and magazines to trade for boys' books and magazines. Jack Parsons, 499 5th Ave., New Rochelle, N. Y.

Have books, traps, magazines, rifle, battery, lantern, many other things. Want tools, books, or? William Hynek, Park River, N. Dak.

Have 10-strand McFadden exerciser and various radio parts. What have you? Leo Papanek, 5115 Seventh Ave., Kenosha, Wisc.

Have knives, watches, rings, fishing tackle, books and magazines. What have you? Audrey Herberg, Box 634, Brady, Texas.

Want motion picture camera, target rifle, binoculars. Have radio parts, 2 storage B batteries, etc. Harry J. Moss, 708 W. 55th St., Chicago, Ill.

Have magazines, books, uke, foreign coins, combination physical exerciser, bicycle. Want books, magazines, barbell, music, or? Jack Rogers, R. D. 1, Corsopolis, Pa.

Have car, fishing tackle, flashlights, stamps, magazines. Want camera, or Indian goods, or? Write. Cicero Vanscoy, Kerens, W. Va.

Will exchange foreign stamps for United States stamps, or anything useful. F. Soule, 604 Masonic Temple, Minneapolis, Minn.

Have antique bound books, Petersons, and magazines, 1832 to 1905 stamps, on envelope 1875 up. What have you? William Tunstall, Box 43, Belhaven, N. C.

Have course in photoplay writing, books, magazines, and other articles. What have you? Julius Vitzian, R. 3, Box 560, Elk Grove, Calif.

Have BB shotgun. Will exchange for boxing gloves, hunting knife with cable. John W. Gates, 74 Jos Janibbe Ave., Ford, Ont.

Have radios, bicycles, "Cowboy Stories" magazines, flashlights. Want cowboy articles, or? Jack Conroy, 679 26th Ave., San Francisco, Calif.

New Way to Learn ELECTRICITY at Home in spare time

Training Built by 29 Noted Engineers!

This is no one-man, one-idea school. Engineers from leading Electrical corporations and Universities have helped me develop this complete home-instruction, men of such high standing they would not lend their names to any instructor or school not giving honest service to every student. Lessons prepared by men from:

1. General Elec. Co.
2. Commonwealth Edison Co.
3. Western Electric and many others.

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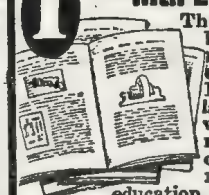
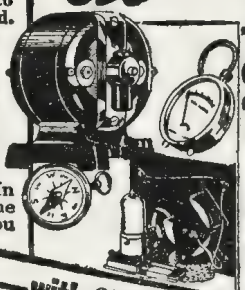


The Laws of Electricity made easy to understand. In simple language—written for men with only common school education. In the first half we cover the subjects usually included in many entire correspondence courses. In the second half we give you the advanced work necessary if you aim to fill one of the **Better-Paid** Electrical Jobs.



2—with Job Tickets

A wonderful new system originated at the American School. After you have the Theory from the Lessons, we virtually "send you out on the job" with Job-tickets and Outfits. These Job-tickets are illustrated, and give one-step-at-a-time directions for doing practical work. They show the materials and tools to use and tell you the short cuts and new ideas.

3—with OUTFITS

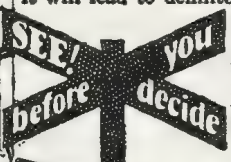
SEVEN (7) outfits of standard tools and materials supplied every student without extra charge. With lessons to explain WHY and Job-tickets to tell you HOW, this valuable equipment enables you to get a practical slant on Electricity—QUICK!

1. Electric Soldering KIT.
2. Bell-wiring equipment.
3. Electric-light wiring equipment.
4. Voltmeter and compass.
5. Transformer.
6. Radio Receiving Set.
7. Man-size MOTOR.

I send it to you "knock-down," with job-tickets for wiring the field and armature. For changing the voltage, etc.

GUARANTEED TRAINING!

When we accept your enrollment for this wonderful home-instruction in Electricity we give you an agreement in writing that it will lead to definite benefits in position and salary, otherwise every penny you have paid us will be refunded. The American School believes home-training—like all other things—should be guaranteed as proof of its value.



NEW WAY TO START!

Find out if you like Electrical work—find out if job-tickets are EASY to master. Don't take our word for it—SEE for yourself before you decide. START with the COUPON, below. We'll send you 5 Job-tickets absolutely FREE—the same material sent to new students when they pay their money and enroll—to prove that you can learn at home in your spare time—to prove this training is honest, complete, simple.

START with the COUPON!

Send no Money

FREE! Job Service

We can frequently help our students find a beginner's job in Electricity within a few weeks after enrolling. And in addition we accept your enrollment with the positive agreement to help you find a well-paid Electrical position within 60 days after completing this training or your tuition will be refunded.

BIG SALARIES!

Waiting for You in Electricity

Electricity is one of the greatest, FASTEST GROWING businesses you can get in to. Leaders like **Edison, Marconi** and **Insull** say it offers bigger opportunities today than ever before, that young men can make more money and climb higher than in other fields. Even skilled Electricians earn bigger pay than mechanics in other lines. But with my training you can prepare for the big BOSS-JOBS in Electricity, positions as chief Electrician Supt. of Power Plant, Electrical Draftsman, Electrical Contractor, Supt. of Electrical Construction, etc., paying $250 to $500 a month—and more.

5 Job Tickets Absolutely FREE

American School Now beginning its 30th year of service. Chartered as an Educational institution. Not one dollar in profits has ever been paid out; every cent received for tuition has been returned to our students in instruction and service. Over 200 educators, executives and engineers have prepared the instruction we offer.

Chief Engineer Dunlap, Elec. Div.
American School, Dept. EC-68
Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago

Send me, please, 5 Job-tickets absolutely free, and facts about the great Electrical business, without obligating me in the slightest degree.

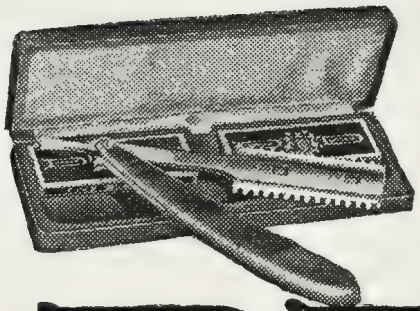
Name.....

Street No.....

City.....State.....

Chief Engineer Dunlap
ELECTRICAL DIVISION

American School Dept. EC-68 Drexel Av. and 58th St. Chicago



DURHAM-DUPLEX

The Blades Men Swear By-not At

EITHER SET ~

$1.50

With Two 50¢ Pkgs of Blades

Interchangeable Blades 50c for package of 5

AN APPEAL TO REASON

COMMON sense tells you that the safety razor with the best blade is the one for you to use. It's the blade—nothing else—that takes the beard off your face. Durham Duplex Blades are made of the finest razor steel imported from Sweden. They are the longest—that saves time, one stroke does the work of two. They are thick and strong—you get the heart of the steel only for an edge—we grind away the rest. They are hollow ground—that gives you the keenest and most lasting edge.

Each and every blade is hair tested before being packed.

The Durham Duplex Razor gives you the sliding diagonal stroke—*cutting* your beard instead of scraping it off.

DURHAM-DUPLEX RAZOR CO., Jersey City, N.J.
Factories: Jersey City; Sheffield, Eng.; Paris, France; Toronto, Can. *Sales Representatives in All Countries.*

Special Offer 25c

Take this coupon to your dealer or send to us and get a genuine Durham-Duplex Razor with only one blade for 25c

Durham-Duplex Razor Co., Jersey City, N.J. (Address for Canada; 50 Pearl St., Toronto, Can.) I enclose 25c for razor and blade. Check type preferred. NSG-8

Name.....

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I prefer Long Handled Type.....Safety Type.....

Amazing Rain-proof Cap Pays Men $10 a Day!

How would you like to earn $10.00 a day by just pouring water on a sample Taylor cap? Many men earning this much and more making this amazing three-minute demonstration. Taylor Caps, made rain-proof by secret process, look and wear like any other fine caps—and absolutely defy moisture. Men buy on sight. You collect big commission in advance on every order

Selling Equipment Now FREE

This absolutely new cap idea can put you on easy street. You need no experience or cash to start making big money at once. We supply everything free. Rush name and address for big new outfit showing beautiful styles and fabrics. Ask for special free cap offer too. Send no money. But act today before someone else beats you to it. Write

TAYLOR CAP MANUFACTURERS, Desk S-5, Cincinnati, Ohio

COPPER CANS

3 Gal.	$ 4.75
5 Gal.	5.50
8 Gal.	7.50
10 Gal.	10.50
12 Gal.	12.50
15 Gal.	13.50
20 Gal.	18.50

⅜" or ½" Unions

Postage and Insurance Extra

Prices on Large and Special Made Cans and Boilers, by Request.

COPPER TUBING

⅜-inch soft copper tubing, 15c. ½-inch tubing, 25c per foot. Deposit required on all C. O. D. orders.

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NATIONAL CAN COMPANY
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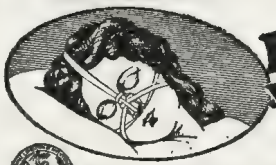


RESHAPE your NOSE

to beautiful proportions—while you sleep!

Gold Medal Won 1923

ANITA NOSE ADJUSTER is SAFE, painless, comfortable. Speedy, permanent results guaranteed. Doctors praise it. No metal to harm you. Small cost.

BEFORE-AFTER

● Write for FREE BOOKLET

ANITA CO., DEPT. H-42, ANITA BLDG., NEWARK, N.J.

Agents $72 a Week

Introducing finest line New Guaranteed Hosiery you ever saw. For men, women, children. All kinds, 126 styles and colors. Written guarantee to wear seven months.

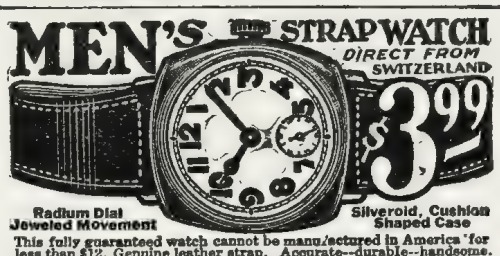
New Auto Given We furnish you with new Auto to travel in. Write today for new selling plan. We deliver or you deliver—suit yourself. No experience needed. No license fee to pay. Credit given. Write today. (12)

Wilknit Hosiery Co.
No. 1407, Greenfield, O.

Work all or part time. New samples furnished. Exclusive territory

MEN'S STRAP WATCH

DIRECT FROM SWITZERLAND



$3.99

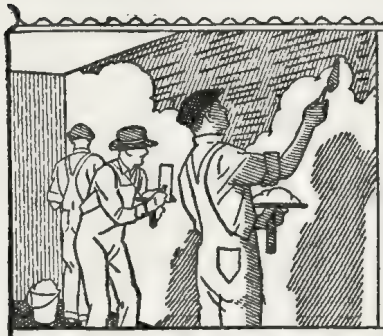
Radium Dial Jeweled Movement

Silveroid, Cushion Shaped Case

This fully guaranteed watch cannot be manufactured in America for less than $12. Genuine leather strap. Accurate—durable—handsome. **SEND NO MONEY.** Pay on delivery $3.99 plus postage. "FEDERAL."

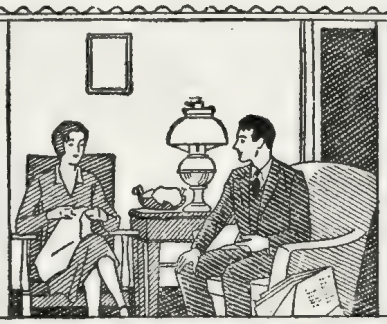
U. S. Swiss Agents, 561 Broadway, New York City, Dept. W.78

FORMER PLASTERER NOW MAKING $12,000 A YEAR



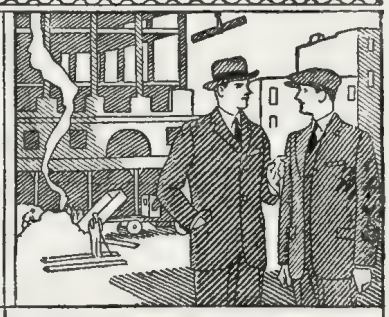
Worked for Small Salary

Henry J. Beilman had little education and little opportunity to get ahead, but he refused to give up. Deep within him was the longing to make something of his life before it was too late—to *build* a building some day instead of tinkering around it as a plasterer or bricklayer.



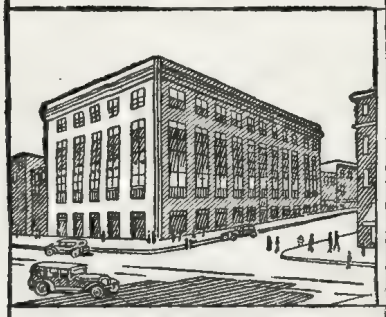
Resolves to Earn More Money

"If spare time study can help other men to get out of the rut," he said, "it can help me. I'm going to take up a course with the International Correspondence Schools and study at home. It's the only way I can ever hope to put myself on a par with technically trained men."



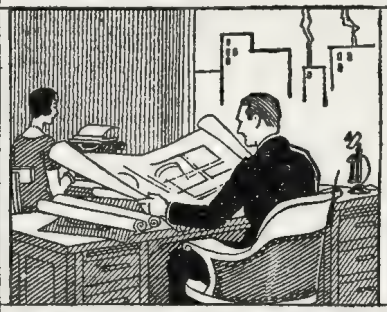
Gets Offer from Contractor

Beilman's friends laughed at him and said he was wasting his time, but he kept right on studying, for he could see how the course was helping him in his work. Soon one of the leading contractors heard about "this bright young man" and made him superintendent at a fine increase in salary.



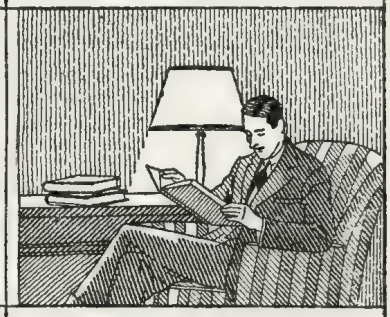
Secures Big Contract

Beilman went ahead so rapidly that he decided to start a business of his own. He met with unusual success from the very start and today his income is "more than $12,000 a year." Recently he handled the contracting work of the new $500,000 Chamber of Commerce building in Scranton.



Glad He Studied at Home

"I give the International Correspondence Schools full credit for my success," Mr. Beilman writes; "there is nothing better for the man who has been deprived of the advantages of a college education. Many of my friends also give the I. C. S. full credit for their ability to do their work efficiently and well."



The Secret of His Success

Henry J. Beilman is a successful man today because he had vision—ambition—and perseverance. He realized that he had to *learn* more before he could *earn* more. Instead of just drifting along, he picked a definite goal and then worked and strived until he made his dreams come true.

MAIL THIS COUPON FOR FREE BOOKLET

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS, Box 2120-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me one of your booklets and tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Personnel Organization
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- ☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Private Secretary
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ French
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Show Card Lettering
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- ☐ Civil Engineer
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Metallurgy
- ☐ Steam Engineering
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Architect
- ☐ Blueprint Reading
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ Automobile Work
- ☐ Airplane Engines
- ☐ Navigation
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- ☐ Mathematics

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Address .....

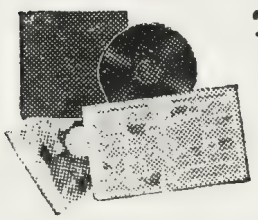
Canadian address—International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal

Get Ready to Join a Harmonica Band!

YES, you can learn to play as well as the next fellow. All you need is a Hohner Harmonica, our free instruction book, and a little practice — and first thing you know, you'll be reeling off the tunes like a veteran!

Pretty soon you'll be looking round for some other chaps to join you in a harmonica band—and that's when you'll really appreciate what fun there is in being able to play this "miniature orchestra."

There are harmonica contests, too, in which thousands of boys take part—and some mighty handsome prizes waiting for those who win!



The NEW *Way to Learn*

A special orthophonic Victor Record (No. 20377) "How to Play the Harmonica" is now available for those who wish to learn by listening to the living voice of the instructor, and following the notes as they are sounded on his harmonica. Illustrated instruction sheet also included. Reverse side reproduces "Old Black Joe" as rendered on harmonica with piano accompaniment. At all dealers selling Victor Records . . . . complete 75c

FREE Instruction Book

Anyone can learn to play the harmonica by following the clear, simple, illustrated instructions given in our booklet "How to Play the Harmonica." Free at your dealer's — or write to M. Hohner, Inc., Dept. 518, 114 East 16th Street, New York.

HOHNER Harmonicas

New! Exquisite! LOOKS LIKE A $500 Dinner Ring

Nine Genuine Diamonds

In this exquisite 18 Kt. white gold dinner ring. Center cluster seven perfectly matched diamonds look just like one magnificent stone. Two sparkling blue white diamonds and tulip shape blue sapphires at sides. Special Sale Price $66.00, $5.00 Down—$5.00 Monthly. Sent for 30 days' TRIAL. Money back guarantee. NO RED TAPE. Relations confidential. ORDER NOW! FREE CATALOG—1001 other big values on same easy terms.

$5.00 DOWN A Year to Pay

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Learn How to BOX

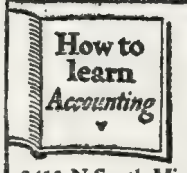
JIMMY DeFOREST BOXING COURSE

has developed Champions by Mail

In 20 weeks, under the System of Jimmy DeForest, World's Greatest Trainer and Maker of Champions, you will master the priceless knowledge that has made champions and started hundreds of boys on the road to Fame and Fortune. Every six months thirty are selected from all classes and recommended to leading promoters for boxing engagements. That's how pupils are brought to the front at once. Boys who were once rank amateurs are today earning big money. The DeForest Course is also the greatest Physical Training System in the World. It has made weaklings strong, rebuilt men who were physically run down; develops energy, self-confidence and courage. Send today for the now famous book, "The Golden Age of Boxing," greatest book of its kind ever written; full of valuable information, photos of great boxers and pupils who became successes over night. Enclose 10c to cover cost of mailing, etc. Write now.

JIMMY DeFOREST BOXING COURSE
347 MADISON AVENUE, BOX 1220, NEW YORK CITY

ACCOUNTING



THOUSANDS of ambitious men are earning more money today because they know Accounting. Send for our 80-page book, "How to Learn Accounting," and the first lesson. Both will be sent *free*.

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3411-N South Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois

A Perfect Looking Nose CAN EASILY BE YOURS

Trados Model No. 25 corrects now all ill-shaped noses quickly, painlessly, permanently and comfortably at home. It is the only noseshaping appliance of precise adjustment and a safe and guaranteed patent device that will actually give you a perfect looking nose. Over 90,000 satisfied users. For years recommended by physicians. 16 years of experience in manufacturing Nose Shapers is at your service. **Model 25 Junior for children.** Write for testimonials and free booklet, which tells you how to obtain a perfect looking nose.

M. TRILETY, Pioneer Noseshaping Specialist
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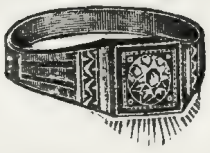

NATURE'S NEAREST RIVAL. Kimberly Tru Flash Gems, latest design, solid sterling silver, platinum finish, gent's ring. Latest style. All the blazing blue-white flame and flash of a genuine $500.00 diamond. Only experts can tell it from the genuine. Guaranteed 25 years. SEND NO MONEY. Pay postman $2.75 and postage on arrival.

LA MAE JEWELERS
481 Wabasha St., St. Paul, Minn.

don't fool yourself

A tip for office workers

What kind of people do employers like to have around them?

Certainly not people with halitosis (unpleasant breath). You couldn't blame a man for firing an employee with halitosis to hire one without it. Why not keep yourself continually on the safe and *polite* side by daily rinsing the mouth with Listerine, the safe antiseptic?

1/3 Had Halitosis

200 dentists declare that about every third patient is frequently halitoxic—and further declare they have been forced to use Listerine in self-defence.

Face to face evidence

Immediately it destroys mouth odors—even strong ones like that of the onion. And it's antiseptic essential oils combat the action of bacteria in the mouth.

Thousands who used to be unwelcome because of halitosis now can go anywhere, Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, U. S. A.

LISTERINE

—the safe antiseptic

IS THERE ANY?

What is the point of paying more when Listerine Tooth Paste is a scientifically correct dentifrice and sells for 25c for a large size tube?

Be an ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL

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BIG AUTO BOOK FREE

Use Scissors NOW for this Amazing FREE AUTO BOOK

Send for this Big, New, FREE Auto Book right now! Same remarkable book that has shown hundreds the way to big *raises in pay.* I'll show you *proof* of it! Why look here! — James T. Summers, Statesville, N. C., was only making $25 a week, now he reports *$50 to $75 a week!* Find out about Opportunities for you in World's *Biggest* Business. See how I train you right in *your own home*—how I put you in line for Big Jobs paying up to *$150 a week!* Common Schooling all you need. Mine is the only "Job-Way" Training. Includes Lifetime Employment Service—Lifetime Consultation Service. Wonderful offer right now of 4 Outfits. Write quick!

CLIP COUPON 4 BIG OUTFITS

Get the FACTS!

Don't wait. Make your start for a QUICK RAISE in pay TODAY. CLIP COUPON NOW!

MAIL THIS "JOB-WAY" COUPON

B. W. COOKE, Directing Engineer,
Chicago Motor Training Corporation, Dept. C-35,
1916 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Send me FREE Auto Book and proof that I can become an Auto Man at home in spare time. Also send your 4 Outfits Offer. It is understood that this obligates me in no way.

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Big Pay - Every Day

Earn $100 a Week

Sell Gibson's better-quality made-to-order all-wool suits, direct to wearer. Our astonishing values sell on sight. **My plan pays biggest commissions in this line, in advance, with extra bonus for producers.** We deliver and collect. 6x9 cloth samples (over 100 styles) and complete outfit in handsome carrying case, furnished to ambitious men who want to earn $100 weekly. Ambitious men write at once.

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Always a Hit

Girls learn to play the Buescher Saxophone and go on the stage with big pay. Travel. Work is play. Always a hit. Anyone can master a simplified, easy blowing Buescher. 3 lessons given on request with each new True Tone Sax. teach scales in an hour. Play tunes in a week. Try any Buescher Instrument in your home for 6 days. Pay by the month. Satisfaction guaranteed. Beautiful Free Book explains everything. Jobs waiting. Send postal today.

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The Irresistible Perfume Desir d'Amour

"LOVE'S DESIRE"

This mysteriously alluring perfume attracts and fascinates. Rich and poor, proud and humble alike fully appreciate its charm and gentle magic. Poignant, sweet and lingering as one's first kiss. Lends the charm you need to be happy in love and social affairs. In crystal vial $2.75 and postage. Pay when delivered. Lasts for many months. Instructions included. Plain wrapper.

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Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn $3,000 to $10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. Only 9,000 Certified Public Accountants in the United States. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C.P.A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Training under the personal supervision of William B. Castenholz, A. M., C. P. A., and a large staff of C. P. A.'s, including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays."

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The World's Largest Business Training Institution

I made my first week $176

A.E.Mohr of N.Y hung up that record

REAL PROFIT

Steinert made $389 in 1 week; Eberts made $29 first day; Wander $213 in 4 days; Mrs. Krone $40 a week spare time alone.

FREE Marcelwaver Super-Selling Outfit offered FREE to any man or woman. Information free.

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WORLD'S GREATEST WONDER OF THE AGE

Amazing invention of French expert gives perfect marcel wave in **NEW** 15 minutes—costs 2c. Women everywhere wild over astonishing results. Agents—men and women—cleaning up biggest profits in years—no competition—patented in all countries—$3.00 **QUICK MONEY** cash profit on every sale—every woman and girl buys on sight. Exclusive territories now being allotted—no time to lose. Send name, address **TO MEN OR WOMEN** and territory wanted. Get FREE SUPER-SELLING OUTFIT Offer. Send NOW.

MARCELWAVER COMPANY
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Stop Using a Truss

Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal

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STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being mechanico-chemico applicators made **self-adhesive** purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. **No straps, buckles or spring attached**—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered. **Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive.** Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely **FREE** Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

Plapao Co., 462 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis Mo.

Name .....

Address .....

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao

STANDARD TIRES $2.95

30 X 3½

NEW LOW PRICES

Size	Tire	New Tube
30x3	$2.75	$1.25
30x3 1-2	2.95	1.50
32x3 1-2	3.25	1.65
31x4	3.65	1.75
32x4	4.00	1.85
33x4	4.45	1.90
34x4	4.65	2.00
32x4 1-2	4.95	2.25
33x4 1-2	5.00	2.50
34x4 1-2	5.25	2.75
30x5	5.25	3.00
33x5	5.50	3.00
35x5	5.75	3.25
29x4.40	3.85	2.25
30x5.77	5.25	3.00
31x5.25	5.45	3.25

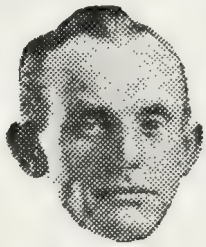
SAVE 60%

GOODRICH, GOODYEAR, FISK, ETC.

Best used tires treated with our secret process — giving **THOUSANDS UNUSUAL MILEAGE**

GUARANTEE: Any tire failing to give satisfaction replaced at one-half purchase price. Send $1.00 deposit on each tire. Plus Shipping Charge Right reserved to substitute. If you send full amount, deduct 5%.

CHICAGO TIRE & RUBBER COMPANY
3100 So. Michigan Ave., Dept. 338, Chicago



$60.00 Per Week!

Dear Mr. Dobe:—"I saw your advertisement, clipped the coupon and got started. Your course has already helped raise my salary to $60.00 a week and in addition I get 50% of the profit on the construction of all buildings of which I am draftsman and general superintendent."

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$600.00 a Month Wouldn't Tempt Him!

Dear Mr. Dobe:—"When I enrolled with you I was making $3.20 per day. A short time ago I was offered a position to net me $600 a month but it did not tempt me. I am in business for myself and wouldn't take a position at any price. I have a home worth $19,000 and two automobiles. You can see what your course has meant to me."

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Learned Drafting at Home!

Dupree, Zaroni and Foster are all products of the easy and quickly learned Dobe plan of teaching drafting at home. No other man uses the Dobe method. From Dobe you get real practical drafting work, keep the job you have now, stay right at home and in a few months you learn the great profession of drafting. No railroad fare, no board bill, no going to a distant city. If these men have been able to make the great success for which they give Dobe all the credit, how can you offord to pass up the chance? You can't!

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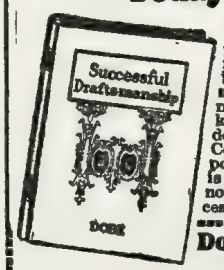

They asked for the Free Book first. Will you ask for it today? Certainly you are not obligated at all by writing for "Successful Draftsmanship." Get it and read it. Then make up your mind how successful you can be. These men are making real money and you know the old adage "What man has done man can do." So mail the Free Coupon below—or write a letter or a post-card. Do that now. No man who is dissatisfied with what he is making now should fail to get and read "Successful Draftsmanship."

Dobe Easy Drafting
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You may send me free your book "Successful Draftsmanship" and names and addresses of more Dobe winners.

Name..... *Age*.....

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Post Office..... *State*.....

I Offer YOU $100 a Week!

IF you are interested in a high-grade proposition that will bring you an income of $100 a week, I am ready to make you an offer. I don't care what your age, experience or schooling has been. I need men and women who are ambitious and energetic. That's all. I will give you the same opportunity that has enabled Christopher Vaughn, Ohio, to increase his income to $125 in one week; the same offer that helped L. C. Van Allen, Ill., to increase his earnings from $100 a month to more than $100 a week; the same offer that brings Clara Eisenmenger, Iowa, $3 to $5 an hour; that brings Mrs. B. L. Hodges, N. Y., from $18 to $20 a day, and that enabled Mrs. K. R. Roof, S. C., to make $50 her first week in spare time and $15 in one afternoon.

Here Are the Facts

I am the President of a million-dollar company that has back of it more than 20 years of successful experience. We are the manufacturers of the famous ZANOL Line of Products. We have hundreds of thousands of customers. Last year we spent more than three hundred thousand dollars in advertising ZANOL Products. Our established customers bought fifteen million ZANOL Products last year alone, and our Representatives made a large profit on every dollar's worth sold.

You Can Make $100 a Week

ZANOL Products are never sold in stores. By dealing direct with us our customers are assured of better values and fresher merchandise at low prices. When you become our Representative you will be given a generous profit on all the business that comes from your territory. This year ZANOL Representatives should make more than two million dollars. You can get your share of these tremendous profits. You will have the same opportunity as Henry Albers, Ohio, who worked in a factory for small wages. As a ZANOL Representative he has found it easy to make $100 a week and even made as high as $47 in a single day!

We offer to provide a brand-new Hudson Super Six Coach without any expense to you whatever. Just write for our proposition. Mail the coupon for details of the plan that will give you this handsome closed car, without expense, in addition to an income of $100 a week or more.

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If you can't devote all your time, I'll show you how you can make $8 to $10 a day in your spare time. We furnish complete equipment for doing business FREE. I'll tell you in detail exactly what to do and start you on the road to success and financial independence—right in your own locality. You don't have to pay anything or do anything. You don't risk a penny. Just mail the coupon. But do it NOW, before someone else gets in ahead of you.

Mail This NOW

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Please send me, without cost or obligation, details of your new plan by means of which I can make $100 a week, or more.

Name .....

Address .....

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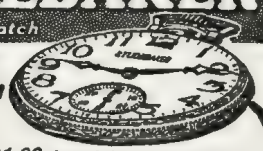
21 JEWEL STUDEBAKER
The Insured Watch



Sent For Only $1.00 DOWN

Only $1.00 down brings you a genuine Studebaker Watch direct from factory. Balance in easy monthly payments. You save 30% to 60%. 21 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels. 8 adjustments including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions. Amazingly accurate. So good we insure it for your lifetime. Over 100,000 sold. A sensational bargain! We ship anywhere. The Studebaker Watch Company is directed by members of the famous Studebaker family—known for 75 years of fair dealing.

WRITE FOR FREE CATALOG!

Send at once for our $1.00 down offer and beautiful six color catalog showing 80 newest Art Beauty Cases and dials. Latest designs in yellow gold, green gold and white gold effects. Men's strap watches, Ladies Bracelet Watches, Diamonds, and Jewelry, also sold at lowest prices and on easy monthly payments.

Special Offer! Chain FREE!

For a limited time we are offering a magnificent Watch Chain FREE! To all who write immediately we will include full particulars. Write *at once*—before this special offer expires.

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68 Miles on 1 Gal. of Gas

Thermostatic Carburetor Control big success. Ford goes 68 miles on 1 gal. gas. Starts coldest motor instantly.

ONE FREE TO INTRODUCE

Sales guaranteed. $15.00 a day guaranteed to distributors.

Write BLANCKE AUTO DEVICES CO.
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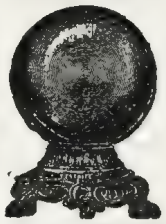

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Tell your friends about the old art of Crystal Gazing. You will amuse them and they will want to know all you "see" in the crystal in this interesting game. Our splendid, flawless globes lend distinction to your room, reflecting all the objects in the most beautiful manner. Artistic metal stand included.

Book of Instructions Free

Pay $2.85—and postage when delivered or send Money Order and save postage.

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Men wanting Forest Ranger, Railway Mail Clerk, Special Agent, and other government positions, $1500 to $4500 year. Write for free particulars and list of positions.

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We give free information how to conquer the tobacco habit easily. Permanent results guaranteed.

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ANDRE'S ACNE CREAM is Guaranteed for all Skin Troubles no matter how severe or chronic. Brings immediate results. Quickly ends Pimples, Blackheads. Eruptions on face or body. Eczema, Barbers' Itch, Scales, Crusts, Pustules, Enlarged Pores, Oily, Shiny or Itching Skin. Lightens Freckles, Softens and Whitens the Skin.

Particulars FREE. Write at once.

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WE SET YOU UP IN BUSINESS!

Can You Sell $35 Suits for $23.75

YOU can do as much business with a Fairbanks sample line as if you had an expensive Main Street location, costly fixtures, and thousands of dollars tied up in "STOCK." And you can deliver *bigger value* because your "store" pays no rent, no clerk hire, no "overhead" expenses. *You can give your customers every cent of this saving.* You can sell ALL-WOOL suits and overcoats, tailored to measure, actually the $35 kind, for only $23.75.

BIG Money for Real Salesmen

We pay you $4 to $5.25 cash on every order, and you can sell hundreds of suits and overcoats each season by our plan. Sliding scale of cash bonuses in addition. You can build up a permanent, *repeating* business of your own with our help and backing. Tailoring experience preferred, but not absolutely necessary. But only men with a record of successful selling in wholesale, retail, or direct lines will be considered.

Write us a letter! Tell us all about yourself, selling experience in detail, your record of tailoring, sales, if any, age, references, territory wanted, etc. No writing back and forth—if your application letter looks O. K. will send you line immediately.

Sample Outfit FREE if You Qualify

Men who mean business, who are willing to work persistently and devote full time to this work will be given the preference. Costly, hard-hitting outfit, a "portable tailoring store" and all necessary supplies furnished absolutely free. 148 smart, all-wool fabrics in the big line for Fall. Write today for QUICK ACTION!

FAIRBANKS TAILORING CO.
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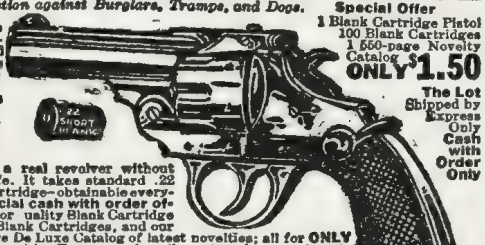
BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL

Protection against Burglars, Tramps, and Dogs.



Well made and effective, modeled on latest type of Revolver: appearance alone is enough to scare a burglar. When loaded, it may be as effective as a real revolver without danger to life. It takes standard .22 Cal. Blank Cartridges obtainable everywhere. **Special cash with order offer:** 1 Superior quality Blank Cartridge Pistol, 100 Blank Cartridges, and our new 550 page De Luxe Catalog of latest novelties; all for **ONLY $1.50.** Shipped by Express only. Cannot go by parcel post. Extra Blank Cartridges 50c per 100. Remember, it is quite harmless, as it will not accommodate leaded cartridges. Special Holster (Cowboy Type) for pistol 50c. No C. O. D. shipments.

Special Offer
1 Blank Cartridge Pistol
100 Blank Cartridges
1 550-page Novelty Catalog
ONLY $1.50
The Lot Shipped by Express Only Cash with Order Only

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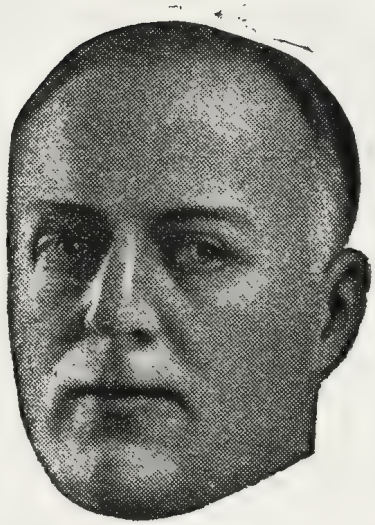
You can now Own a Typewriter!

$3.00 down and its yours
Guaranteed 5 years
Small Monthly Payments
Free Course in Typing
Send Now for Big free Book

Shipman-Ward Mfg. Co., C-188, Shipman Bldg., Chicago *World's Largest Rebuilders*

Name _____

Address _____



"How I Licked Wretched Old Age at 63"

"I Quit Getting up Nights—Banished Foot and Leg Pains . . . Got Rid of Rheumatic Pains and Constipation . . . Improved Embarrassing Health Faults . . . Found Renewed Vitality

"At 61, I thought I was through. I blamed old age, but it never occurred to me to actually fight back. I was only half-living, getting up nights . . . embarrassed in my own home . . . constipated . . . constantly tormented by aches and pains. At 62 my condition became almost intolerable. I had about given up hope when a doctor recommended your treatment. Then at 63, it seemed that I shook off 20 years almost overnight."

Forty—The Danger Age

These are the facts, just as I learned them. In 65% of all men, the vital prostate gland slows up soon after 40. No pain is experienced, but as this distressing condition continues, sciatica, backache, severe bladder weakness, constipation, etc., often develop.

Prostate Trouble

These are frequently the signs of prostate trouble. Now thousands suffer these handicaps needlessly! For a prominent American Scientist after seven years of research, discovered a new, safe way to stimulate the prostate gland to normal health and activity in many cases. This new hygiene is worthy to be called a notable achievement of the age.

A National Institution for Men Past 40

Its success has been startling, its growth rapid. This new hygiene is rapidly gaining in national prominence. The institution in Steubenville has now reached large proportions. Scores and even hundreds of letters pour in every day, and in many cases reported results have been little short of amazing. In case after case, men have reported that they have felt ten years younger in six days. Now physicians in every part of the country are using and recommending this treatment.

Quick as is the response to this new hygiene, it is actually a pleasant, natural relaxation, involving no drugs, medicine, or electric rays whatever. The scientist explains this discovery and tells why many men are old at forty in a new book now sent free, in 24-page, illustrated form. Send for it. Every man past forty should know the true meaning of those frank facts. No cost or obligation is incurred. But act at once before this free edition is exhausted. Simply fill in your name below, tear off and mail.

THE ELECTRO THERMAL COMPANY
4874 Main Street **Steubenville, Ohio**

THE ELECTRO THERMAL CO.,
4874 Main Street, Steubenville, Ohio.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... *State*.....

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Home-Study Courses that Lead to Business Careers

Do you want an important, high-salaried position? You can have one if you can do the work. LaSalle experts will show you how, guide you step by step to success and help solve your personal business problems thru the time-saving LaSalle Problem Method. Our *salary-increasing plan* enables you to prepare during your spare hours, without interference with your present duties. Simply mark on the coupon the field in which you desire success, and we will mail you a valuable book describing the opportunities in that field, together with an outline of our *salary-increasing plan.* Also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One." There is no cost or obligation. Find out how the *salary-increasing plan* starts average men and women on the high road to success and financial independence. Check and mail the coupon NOW.

—— —— —*Find Yourself Thru LaSalle*— —— ——

LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
The World's Largest Business Training Institution
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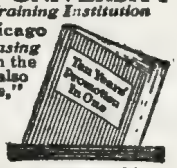

Tell me about your *salary-increasing plan* as applied to my advancement in the business field checked below. Send also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Railway Station Management
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
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- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Banking and Finance
- ☐ Modern Business Correspondence and Practice
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Personnel and Employment Management
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Commercial Spanish
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Stenotypy

Name.....

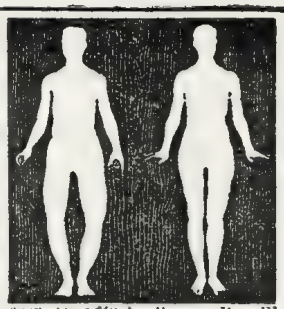
Present Position.....

Address.....

If You Are A MAN

worthy of the name and not afraid to work, I'll bet you $50 that you can't work for us 30 days and earn less than $200. Think I'm bluffing? Then answer this ad and show me up. Openings for Managers. The "Wonder Box" sells on sight.

TOM WALKER
DEPT. 28 · PITTSBURGH, PA.



PERSONAL APPEARANCE

is now more than ever the keynote of success, both in social and business life. Bow-legged and Knock-Kneed men and women, both young and old, will be glad to hear that my new appliance will successfully straighten, within a short time, bow-leggedness and knock-kneed legs, safely, quickly and permanently, without pain, operation or discomfort. Worn at night. My new "Lim-Straitner," Model 18, U. S. Patent, is easy to adjust; its result will soon save you from further humiliation, and improve your personal appearance 100 per cent. (Model 18 is not like old-fashioned splints or braces, with bothersome straps, hard to adjust, but a scientific, modern device of proven merit, used and recommended for the last 5 years by physicians everywhere.)

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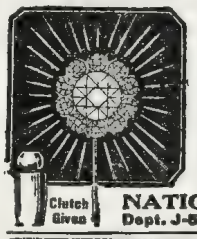
Skin Troubles

Cleared up—often in 24 hours. To prove you can be rid of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne Eruptions on the face or body, Barbers' Itch, Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin, simply send me your name and address today—no cost—no obligation. **CLEAR-TONE** tried and tested in over 100,000 cases—used like toilet water—is simply magical in prompt results. You can repay the favor by telling your friends; if not, the loss is mine. WRITE TODAY.

E. S. GIVENS, 412 Chemical Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.



50c A WEEK

No References. No Delay. Nothing to Sign. Just say "Send that Pin."

Blazing, blue-white, full karat, duster scarf pin. Genuine Solid 14 Karat white gold, mounted with nine dazzling diamond reproductions. Looks like $500.00. Gorgeous gift. Velvet gift box and anti-theft clutch free. Send no Money. Pay postman only $2.75 and postage and delivery and 50c weekly after that ($10.75 in all).

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Do you enjoy outdoor life close to Nature? Get Forest Ranger job; salary $125-$200 month and home furnished; make as much more fishing, hunting, trapping on the side; permanent, no strikes or shut-downs; vacations on full pay. For further particulars, write

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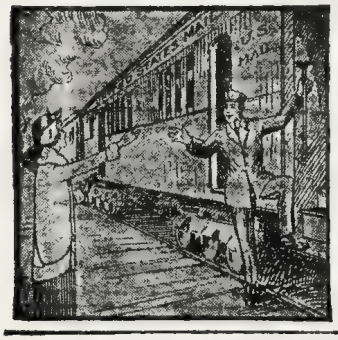

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FREE New Big Sample OUTFIT. New style convenient carrying case outfit; large all-wool samples and all supplies furnished **FREE. Write at once.**

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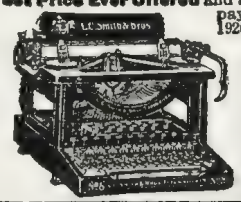
Here is a bargain—a genuine L. C. Smith (the only ball-bearing typewriter made) at the **Lowest Price Ever Offered** and at small monthly payments. All the 1926 improvements; highest quality rebuilt; **guaranteed for 5 yrs.**



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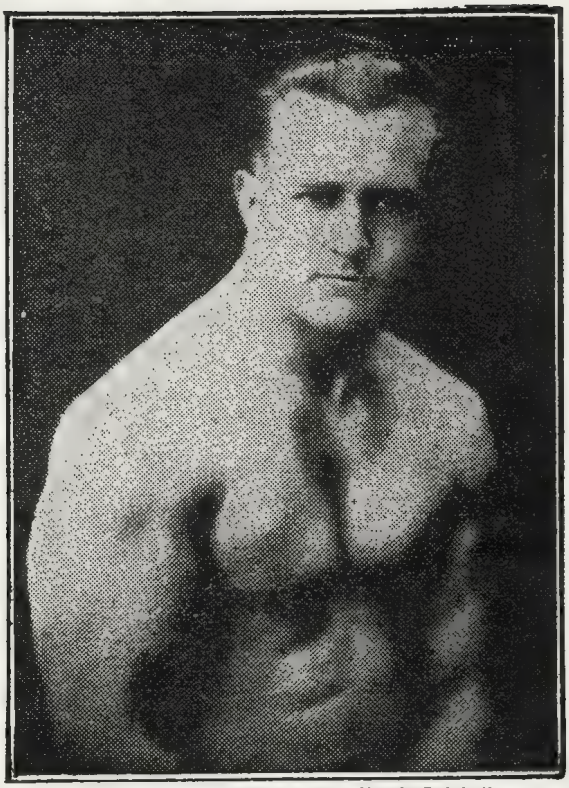

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Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling," "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," "Endurance," etc.

FORBIDDEN PLEASURES

Just like Adam and Eve were punished for eating forbidden fruit, so do a vast number of men, both young and old, suffer today because they lack strength.

Dissipation has weakened many so they can no longer withstand the slightest exertion—others were born weak and have never known how to build their bodies so they could take advantage of the many pleasures they seek. There is no excuse for anyone crying for health and strength—everyone can enjoy life—I will show you how.

I RESCUE WEAKLINGS

They call me the Muscle Builder—but I do more than that. I take that old bony and muscleless body of yours and rebuild it from head to foot. I do a good job with your inner organs too! My proven method of Muscular Development builds your tissue and muscles throughout your entire body. After I get done with you, you will not only be a picture of health, but you will be "there" to withstand any problem of life, that only a real healthy man can stand. You will not know of any forbidden pleasures. You will be able to live until your heart's content. I will give you that springy step rubber heel advertisements tell you about. I will make you a he-man. Your friends will marvel at you. I will put you far away from your grave and keep you away.

HERE'S WHAT I DO THE FIRST THIRTY DAYS

With my system of Muscular Development everything comes easy. The first thirty days I put one solid inch of muscle on your arm and add two inches to your chest. I don't promise this, I guarantee it. That's why they call me the Muscle Builder, but this is only a starter. After you have worked with me for ninety days you will be what is commonly termed as in the pink of health. You will bubble over with pep, enthusiasm and vitality. No one will dare call you skinny or kid you about being a weakling—let them try it and I'll bet they will never do it again. This new strength and health of yours will fool them all and make every one respect you and seek your companionship.

AN OUNCE OF ACTION IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Action is the thing that counts. Take me up and make me prove that I can remake you—that I can make a muscular marvel out of you. You take no risk. I don't promise, I guarantee to do it. If I fail, and I am sure I won't, you are out nothing—that's fair, isn't it?

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The sooner you get started, the quicker will you know what real health is so that you can hurry into a new life where there are no forbidden pleasures. If you want to live a long life send for my big new 64-page book "Muscular Development" which is described below—it's yours free.

Send for my new 64-page book

"Muscular Development"—It Is Free

It contains over four dozen full-size photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send today—right now before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN

305 Broadway Dept. 1708 New York City

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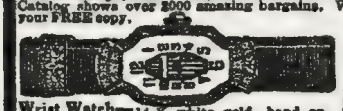

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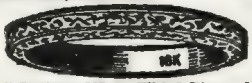

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No. 824—The "Elite" 18-K white gold, $7.50

All Platinum $25 up. With 3 Diamonds, $50; 5 Diamonds, $70; 7 Diamonds, $80; 9 Diamonds, $100; surrounded by Diamonds, $200.

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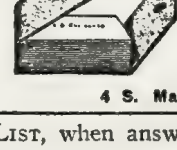

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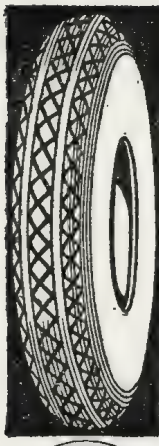

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31x4	3.50	1.70	34x4½	4.50	2.30
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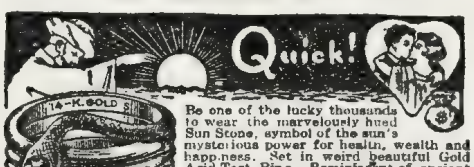

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THE COMOS MAGAZINE CO., COPENHAGEN V. DENMARK, 21. (Europe).

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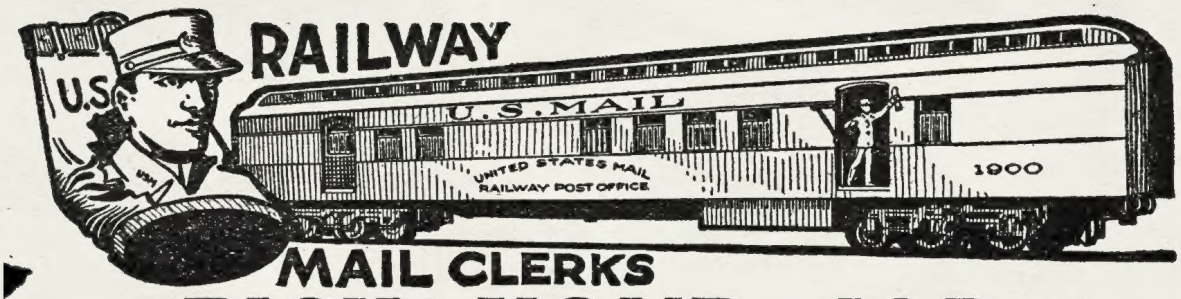

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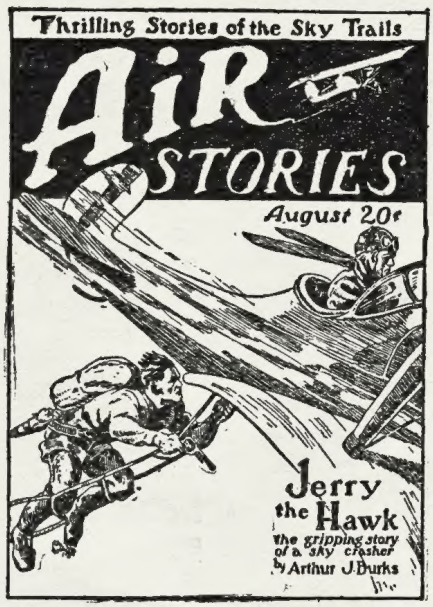
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the gripping story of a sky crasher
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E *Employment Service Placing you in it, or money refunded!*

Come into Drafting!

Learn drafting—how to *make* and *read* plans, and the doors of opportunity in all mechanical, building, and engineering lines swing open for you! There are more well-paid Drafting jobs open today than in any other one profession or trade. There's a variety, a fascination to Drafting that will grip you. No other work is so interesting, *so well paid*—no other field offers equal opportunities for quick promotion.

The Draftsman is the Boss of the Works!

Destroy blue-prints and *plans*, and the wheels of all Industry will stop until new ones can be made. Every move of every workman on the job is *controlled* by the Draftsman through his plans. Railroads, public works, buildings of a hundred sorts, machinery, electricity, automobiles—all manufacturing and construction *start* on the Drafting table! That's the kind of work to get into, friend. Where you have the same chance as anybody else to make a *quick success!*

If You Are Now Earning less than $40 a Week

I guarantee to *prepare* you for a fine drafting position, right in your home, in your spare time; then I guarantee to help you find such a position paying at least 50% *more than you earn today*, within 60 days after you complete this training, or I will refund small amount you pay for tuition. We make this agreement to prove this instruction *will* make you a *real Draftsman*. Back of this guarantee are the entire resources and reputation of this million dollar institution.

O. C. Miller

O. C. MILLER
Director Extension Work

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Director Extension Work

The American School

is the first in the home-study field to recognize the need of guaranteeing its courses with a money-back contract, if the training fails to accomplish the benefits you expect. Thus all risk and doubt are eliminated—**either the training will help you to a better job and a raise in pay or it will cost you nothing.** To better carry out this important service, we maintain a **National** employment department which keeps in touch with the employers of Draftsmen all over the U. S. All this without extra charge to our students and graduates.

Professional Outfit Given!

You will naturally expect the American School to give you the best kind of instruments and tools with the best kind of training. This outfit is good enough to use professionally after you finish your training. Mail coupon for description.

3 DRAFTING Lessons FREE!

—to prove you can learn at home in spare time!

You'll be surprised how *quickly* you can learn Drafting by our new one-step-at-a-time method. We start you off by doing actual Drafting room jobs from the very beginning. Before you know it, you are batting out professional plans like a veteran. Get the first three lessons—the coupon brings them. Do *them*. Test your ability to master Drafting at home. Without cost or obligation.

The American School

Dept. DC-68, Drexel Ave. and 58th, Chicago

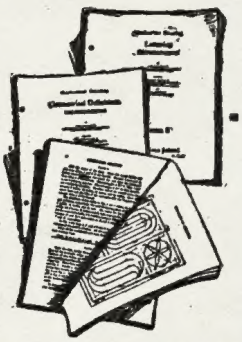
O. C. MILLER, Director Extension Work
American School, Dept. DC-68, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago.

Your offer to send me three lessons free and facts about the opportunities in Drafting and about your course, looks good to me. It is understood I am not obligated in any way in making this request.

Name .....

Address .....

Occupation ..... *Age* .....



Carlton Mills Offer You $100 a Week to Start,

We know if you'll put this complete Men's Furnishing Line in Your Pocket... you'll put $100.00 a week in with it!

MEN and Women, *by the hundreds*, earn this worthwhile amount . . . . Many earn more!

We manufacture the famous and complete *Carlton Custom Quality Line* of Men's Shirts, to which has just been added an equally wonderful range of Underwear & Pajamas.

What an opportunity!

Through you, we reach an American market of 35,000,000 prospects. Ever new—never exhaustible!

No experience is necessary . . . all you have to do is show our DeLuxe sample book pictured above—quote our low prices and take orders without effort. We deliver, collect and guarantee satisfaction.

You are paid in cash *daily*. To those who are ambitious, we pay besides their big earnings, extra cash bonuses, and a share in profits.

If you prefer, begin by devoting spare time—your earnings will soon justify full time to this big money making proposition.

Complete Sample Outfit—Free!

Upon receipt by us of special coupon to the right, you will be promptly furnished with complete sample outfit—prices—order books, supplies, and valuable selling helps.

Compact Sales Kit furnished free—*goes in your pocket like the $100.00 a week*—so that you can conduct your business easily, with dignity and make more money in less time with least effort.

Let Carlton Mills build you a prosperous, happy future—in the present.

Act Now . . . . via Coupon!

No time like *at once* when an opportunity such as this one presents itself to you.

Fill in, clip and mail! In less than a week you'll shake hands thankfully with the hand that wrote the coupon.

Don't delay—mail it today!

[DISTRICT MANAGERS—Line up with this big selling proposition while desirable territories are still open for assignment. Write C. E. MANDEL, *President*, TODAY!]

DRESS SHIRTS

WORK SHIRTS

FLANNEL SHIRTS

UNDERWEAR

PAJAMAS

outfit free!

It Fits Your Pocket
Convenient to Carry wherever you go~

Biggest Commissions

25% Actually the commissions plus bonuses exceed 25%. Commissions are paid to you in advance. Carlton's Superiority, Variety and Completeness of Line enable you to run this 25% up to real big money. You have unlimited earning power. Make the most of it!

Bonuses in Addition

Bonuses too! Carltonians are given extra rewards with regularly paid bonuses in units up to $300.00. Your daily earnings are thereby given a real boost. Full details of the liberal Cash Bonus Plan are outlined in your sales outfit.

40% Profit Sharing

Paid in addition to your commissions and in addition to your bonuses. The most amazing and far-reaching move in the Direct Selling Field. Explained in "Earn Big Money" that goes with outfit.

FREE: TRANSPORTATION AND FREE COLLAR

It costs us $100,000 a year to prepay order shipments. But it is a saving to your customers! The latter is an additional sales feature with shirts priced from $2.95. . . Collars are worth from 50c to $1.00.

Pajamas—Underwear

Just added! . . . Two new departments that put The Carlton Line in a high powered sales class of its own! A Complete Gent's Furnishing Line in Your Pocket. Including Dress, Work and Flannel Shirts The Carlton Line comprises 181 styles and models. How's that for a *salable* selection?

The new Pajama and Underwear lines open new roads to increased business for you—double profits from every call—double satisfaction to each customer . . . all numbers are beautifully swatched and illustrated in handsome new sample book.

Carl E. Mandel, President, Dept. 333B
Carlton Mills, Inc.,
100 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Dear Mr. Mandel: Send at once FREE Sample Outfit of Carlton Shirts, Underwear and Pajamas . . . I'm ready for the $100.00 a week.

Name .....

Address .....

City .....State .....

© 1927

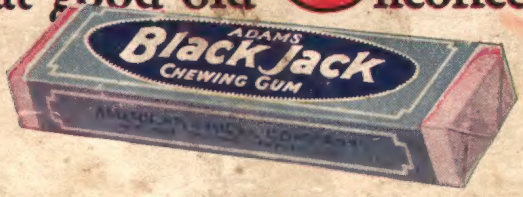
Carlton Custom Quality Fifth Avenue New York

Carlton MILLS Inc.

100 FIFTH AVENUE ~ NEW YORK ~ N.Y.

Black Jack

"that good old licorice flavor"



Give this picture a title. $1000 in prizes

$1000

FOR TITLES TO THIS BLACK JACK PICTURE

8 cash prizes will be paid as follows

1st Prize	$500
2nd Prize	250
3rd Prize	100
4th Prize	50
5th to 8th Prizes ($25 each)	100

Here's fun for every member of the family. This picture needs a title. Perhaps chewing Black Jack and enjoying its good old licorice flavor, although not a condition of this contest, will help you to find the winning title that fully expresses the story this picture tells. Everybody residing in the United States or Canada is eligible except employees of the manufacturers of Black Jack Chewing Gum.

RULES

1: Each entry must contain a title suggestion in 20 words or less and the name and address of the sender. 2: Contestants may submit as many answers as they wish. When sending in suggested titles white paper cut the size of a Black Jack wrapper (2¾"x3"), or the reverse side of Black Jack wrappers may be used. Use one piece of paper or one wrapper for each title suggested. 3: All entries for this contest must be sent to "Black Jack Titles", Dept. 7, American Chicle Company, Long Island City, New York, and must be in before midnight, Aug. 22, 1927. Winners to be announced as soon thereafter as possible. 4: Titles must be sent first class mail, postage prepaid. 5: Originality of thought, cleverness of idea, and clearness of expression and neatness will count. 6: The judges will be a committee appointed by the makers of Black Jack and their decisions will be final. If there are ties, each tying contestant will be awarded the prize tied for.

Study the picture. Think of Black Jack's delicious licorice flavor. Then send in your title or titles. Contest closes at midnight, Aug. 22, 1927.